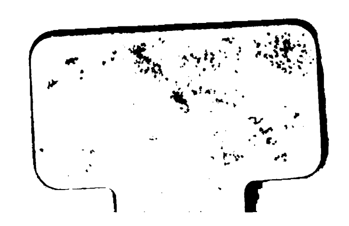

JIMMY'S
LIE
BY
CONSTANCE CROSS.



JIMMY'S LIE:

BY

CONSTANCE CROSS,

AUTHOR OF

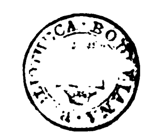
"THE NARROW WAY," (A POEM); "LEFT TO OUR FATHER
"THE GIANT SLAYERS;" "CLEVEDON CHIMES;"
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CONTENTS.

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JIMMY'S LIE.

CHAPTER I.

"AS THE CROW FLIES."

MILES upon miles away from home—miles upon miles over the great unknown sea;—How many? It was impossible to think. And London must be reached first, a comparatively short journey, but one the length of which was considerably magnified by ignorance of it.

A boy was lying under a hedge on a dusty highway, and these were the thoughts passing through his mind. Presently, a tramp strolled by; the boy looked out from under the hedge, and accosted him.

"I say, you, how far is it to London, eh?"

The man stopped, reflected lazily a few moments, described several circles in the fine, loose dust with his stout, knotted stick, then answered, as he scanned the country before him.

"Nigh on twenty-eight or thirty mile."

The boy sat up, and looked along the road a little wistfully, then he said:

"Up or down?"

"Straight ahead, up," replied the man; and he was strolling on when the boy again spoke.

"Isn't there a nearer way?" he asked.

"Well,"—the man considered a little longer than before—"it 'aint so far, in course, as the crow flies."

"Ah, but you see," said the boy laughing, "I'm not a crow; I want to know a near way, because I've got ne'er a half-penny to help me along, and the ship will sail without me, don't you see."

"What ship?" asked the tramp, scrutinizing the boy closely as he spoke.

"My ship," was the laughing reply; "the ship that brought me home from China; oh, it's all right."

"Oh, yes," echoed the man, "it's all right; you've got the cut of a sailor about you, you have; you knows as much about the sea, I'm thinkin', as a field-mouse; why don't yer say right out what you're up to?"

Thus exhorted, the boy sprang from the ground, and began knocking the dust from his clothes.

"Why I mean this," he said, "I mean going to London, and I'd like a nice, quiet, short way of getting there; now, can't you tell me how far your crow makes it?"

"I aint got no crow," replied the man, "that's only just a sayin', that is; but I daresay you could save four or five mile, by going cross country, if yer knowed the way."

"But I don't," said the boy.

"More don't I neither," returned the tramp, again making as though he would move on.

"I say, though, look here."

The man stopped, and turned round as the boy thus called to him.

"Which way have you come?" he asked.

"Main road," replied the tramp laconically.

"What a sight of places you must have come through."

"Well, yes, I have, a goodish many."

"Is it far you've come?"

"Up from the coast."

"Did you come through a place called Hillington?"

"Yes; there was a fair on, as I come through."

"What's the next place called? I mean the place the other side of Hillington."

"Oakleigh, do you mean? a smallish kind of village."

"Aye; was there anything going on there? Did you see an old woman at the pike as you come through?"

"Yes; a rare old one too she was; nigh on eighty year or more."

"Wasn't there no news?" urged the boy.

"Most like you knows it," returned the man.

"No, I don't," said the boy sullenly, "I shouldn't ask you if I did."

"Well, there was a sight of news," remarked the tramp, "Farmer Wilson's stacks was all burnt down last night, and a goodish bit of the farm buildings too, when the folks was away at Hillington fair; there's a mighty fuss about it in the place, and they're sending everywhere after a boy as they think has done it."

The man's eyes, which had been lazily regarding the scene before him, now slowly turned on the lad as he concluded speaking, just in time to see the tell-tale blood rush into his face, and dye it crimson.

"Do you know the folk about Oakleigh?" he asked, with a searching glance at the discomfited boy, for his curiosity was now kindled.

The lad made no response.

"Don't you know the old woman at the pike as you was askin' about?"

The boy hesitated for a moment, then answered,

"I've seen her a few times; wasn't anyone with her at the pike?"

"Yes; a woman a gooddish bit younger nor the old one, she come out to take the tolls; and I could see some fine ladies sittin' inside, and they was all talkin' about Farmer Wilson and the fire; I sat

under the hedge by the door, and all the winders was open, so I could hear what they was sayin'; and I made out as they was the ladies from the big house."

"Was one Miss Em'ly?" asked the boy quickly.

"Ah!" rejoined the tramp, "you *do* know the folk about Oakleigh then, eh?"

The lad's face became dark, but he did not speak.

"I wouldn't like to be that boy when he's caught," remarked the man, with a sinister smile; "if I was that boy, I'd make off sharp to some hidin' place; there's plenty in London."

"But suppose the boy didn't do it after all," observed the lad.

"Oh! there aint no supposin' about it," returned the tramp, "they're pretty sure it's him, they are; why, I believe I could tell yer what that boy was like exact, what colour his eyes and hair was, and the clothes he wore, and everythink; shall I tell ye?"

"No," said the boy savagely, "I don't want to know; but can't you tell me some more about the pike, about the woman as took the tolls; was she looking bad?"

"Her eyes were red with cryin'," said the man, "and I heerd her saying to the ladies as she didn't believe it were her boy as had done it: mothers always says that; mothers never has bad boys; mothers hearts is broke sometimes, and they dies, and is buried, but the bad boys has nothin' to do with it, nothin' at all; anyhows the mothers says so; where are you off to so sharp, London don't lay *that* way?"

For the boy had turned as the tramp was speaking, with his face set resolutely towards Hillington.

"I'd like to see the old woman at the pike," he said; "I'd like to know if she was frightened at the fire; she's given me ha'pence sometimes, the old woman has, and I want to tell her something before I go to the ship."

"You'll never go near no ship," said the tramp, in the tone of one who knew exactly how matters stood, "if you walks many miles of the fifteen 'twixt here and Oakleigh; trouble and fright, and that sort, don't lay heavy on old people like her, they're more like children, and forgets easy; just make on straight to London, and the sooner you gets there the better."

But the boy had walked off as the man was speaking, and presently leaving the high road, struck across a wild furze-grown common, and was soon lost to sight. It was already very late in the afternoon, and the season was autumn; a warm damp wind came blowing up from the south-west as the red sun sank in a mass of threatening clouds; and the rain drizzled, and the leaves fell in a drear companionship. Hour after hour went by, still the boy walked on, not quickly or eagerly, but with the determined, plodding step of one who has something to accomplish. Night closed around him, black, awful night, with its heavy clouds bursting over his head in showers of drenching rain; but when within a mile of Hillington, the moon shone out bright and clear for a few minutes, and the boy who had latterly been pursuing the road-way, once more turned aside to seek the shelter of an out-lying barn away over the fields. Once within it, he found the most sheltered corner, and worn out with his day's exertions, soon sank into a heavy sleep.

Was the boy alone as he lay in the gloomy barn? Are God's creature's *ever* alone? Is there not always an Eye reading the closely-written tablets of their hearts; and a Hand stretched out to help in the time of greatest need; a Light to shine when the darkness is too terrible for sinful souls to bear; and, beyond all, a Love that passeth knowledge.

But the slumbering boy was all unconscious of such companionship; all unconscious too as the gray, weeping morning broke over him, that a pair

of blue eyes, set in a very shining, chubby face, was regarding him with unmixed wonderment, that the smock-frocked owner of the eyes and face was a labouring lad from the adjoining farm, who came daily to his work from the village of Oakleigh.

CHAPTER II.

THE BOY THAT'S WANTED.

The bells in the old square-towered church of Hillington were calling good folk to morning prayers, and the great clock was striking eight, when the boy at last awoke from his heavy sleep, and gradually became sensible of his whereabouts, and of the presence of an on-looker. Very stiff he felt as he rose from his hard bed, and surveyed his miserable condition; clothes soddened, pockets empty; nature craving loudly to be satisfied, and the prospect of a hearty breakfast, or indeed of any breakfast at all, extremely hazy and remote. Then, by degrees, and perhaps for the first time since he had parted from the tramp, the consequences of his return to his native place dawned upon him, and he began to think it would have been wiser to have gone on to London when he was so far on the road, and have left that "something" unsaid which he would like to say to the old woman at the pike.

But the boy was a philosopher in his way, the past could not be remedied, therefore it was useless to regret it; all Oakleigh and Hillington were calling loudly for him; all suspected him of firing Farmer Wilson's stacks, and he had quietly come back to save them any further trouble.

"Oh! Phil, Phil," said the chubby youth in the

smock frock; "your bad ways has brought you to summut at last; it aint no use your hidin' in this barn, master's a-comin' along soon, and he's dead set agin you, master is."

The boy walked to the doorway and looked out; bruised and foot-sore as he was, the idea of making one supreme effort to escape flashed into his mind, but it as rapidly faded, and he retraced his steps and sat down on an old bench.

"I suppose you mean to tell of me, Ned?" he remarked to the shining-faced youth.

"No, Phil, no; I've known ye too long for that, and ye have got ne'er a father to help ye; I've got no call to tell of ye, Phil, for with all your tricks, you're a sight better nor some of them village lads; and have never done me nor mine no harm; I'm sorry enough ye fired them stacks, and so are you now I daresay—"

"No, I'm not," interrupted Phil loudly, with a dark frown; "besides, who told you as I *did* fire them stacks?"

"Why, no one," answered Ned, "everyone says as you've done it; you've got no call to look so fierce at me; I aint goin' to tell on ye."

The boy once more rose and walked to the doorway; the gray, low-hanging clouds shewed no signs of dispersing, and the rain that for an hour or two had been a mere drizzle, now rapidly increased to a steady downfall, likely to last the whole day.

"Well, look here," he said, turning round to Ned with a resolute air, "I'm going on to the pike to see Granny and mother, and get a bit of something to eat; I'm going a near way over the fields, because I don't want to be took before I've seen the folks at home. You can tell your master the way I've gone," he added jeeringly; "and say I've got a fancy to fire *his* stacks when I get a chance;" and he was turning sharply off when Ned called after him.

"P'raps ye may be took afore ye gets to the pike," he said, "ye'd better send a few words by me to the folk up there, they're in a sorry way, I tell ye; ye'd better send a few words."

But Phil heeded not the kindly lad, he merely stowed his hands in his pockets, and whistled idly as he strolled off.

All through the wet fields he went, and the meadows at the back of the churchyard, intersected by a wide, sluggish stream the people of Hillington chose to call a river. Following its windings he at length left the town some distance behind, and found himself within a quarter of a mile of the toll-gate. The difficulties of his position had now increased, for there was no other way of traversing this quarter of a mile except by the high road; but the boy's nature was a bold one, he did not hesitate long as to the course he should pursue, so lightly vaulting over the gate of the last field through which he had come, and keeping as close to the hedge as he well could, he hastened his steps towards the toll-house.

What a quiet, neat little home it looked, the boy thought, as a turn in the road brought it full to his view; how happy the old Granny's last days might be under its shelter, and how pleasant the daily toil of the mother could be made, if Phil would be only a passably good lad—if he would leave off robbing the neighbours' orchards, and poaching on the Squire's preserves, and doing all sorts of things that always ended in trouble and disgrace; and the boy whistled louder and louder the more he thought on these matters, until at last he became sensible that the noise he was making would probably attract attention, if not from some unknown quarter, from one of the many eye-like windows of his home.

He had now quite reached the little gabled tenement, and, fortunately for him, no living object was visible in all the country round, no foot-fall of ap-

proaching horse or man could be heard. Cautiously he crept under the sill of the lowest casement, then by slow degrees raised his head, and peered through the little latticed panes.

The room, at first sight, he thought was empty; it was not very easy to see through the rain and mist, but he soon made out it's familiar features—the small deal table by the door, with tickets to clear other gates laid out on it, and two piles of coppers for change; the well-polished chairs set primly against the wall; the little round, centre table, on which stood a drinking glass filled with rich-coloured autumn flowers; the quaint mantel-piece, with its two brass candlesticks, and snuffers hanging obliquely between them, surmounted by a sampler, worked in the village school by Granny in her youth, and reckoned a masterpiece by the dames around. Up in a corner the old, asthmatic, eight-day clock grated and rattled, and threatened by its complex and mysterious sounds to come to some violent and tragic end, as it had done any time for the last thirty years, impressing one with the fancy that instead of marking the time pleasantly, it was trying to frighten it away.

In front of the fire-place was stretched a piece of cocoa-nut matting, and on it was placed a straight, high-backed chair in which Granny sat, or rather crouched, as Phil could not help thinking he had never seen her crouch before, every now and then stretching her hands tremulously forward, then convulsively clasping them together, and letting them fall helplessly on her lap; and her head was bent so low over them, and swayed so mournfully from side to side, that the broad frill of her white lawn cap completely hid her face from him. Granny was moaning too, he was quite sure of that, and murmuring fragments of her troubled thoughts, as is often the habit of very aged people when grief weighs heavy on their worn-out hearts. Altogether, it was

not comforting to look at Granny—it made something come into Phil's throat that was difficult to swallow, and another mist than that caused by the rain dimmed his eyes; this would not do at all, he thought, he must make off to the meadows again, and go without his breakfast, so with this resolution he turned from the window, and encountered—Mr. Inspector Mills, who had come up behind from Hillington, and who now laid his hand firmly on Phil's shoulder, and informed him that "he was just the lad he wanted."

CHAPTER III.

THE OLD WOMAN AT THE PIKE.

All unconscious of what was taking place outside the walls of her little home, Granny still murmured and moaned, and rocked her aged form uneasily before the fire.

"Sure it was never our Phil that did it—sure Jane, eh?"

"Yes, mother, quite sure."

A woman of middle age had now come into the room, although her words were distinct, her voice was low, and there was a faint tremor in it.

"But where has he gone?" asked the old woman peevishly; "why did he go away that very day, and never come back since?"

"I cannot tell you, mother; I know our poor Phil has always been wild and wayward, but this wicked thing he never did; no, never."

There was no tremor in her voice this time, and for a few moments her words seemed to pacify Granny; but after a little while she broke out again,

"He don't come back," she said fretfully, "that's what I don't like; he don't come back."

Jane made no answer; she walked to the window and looked out, a heavily-laden waggon from Hillington pulled up at the gate as she did so, and she went to the door to take the toll.

"This is a sorry scrape for your Phil, Mrs. Hartley," remarked the driver, as she gave him a ticket, and some change; "it aint a nice sight to see a young lad like that hauled off to prison as I see him just now, lookin' so dont-care and vicious-like; bad ends come of such beginnings in general."

The woman's face became deadly pale.

"Phil took to prison," she almost gasped, "who's took him?"

"Why, the p'liceman, in course;" answered the man, in a tone which implied that *she* knew that as well as he did; "why, it aint above three hundred yards up the road as I met them, comin' from the pike. Do you mean to say you don't know nothink about it?"

"I've never seen Phil," she said, "since the day before yesterday, the day of the night of the fire; he went away in the forenoon as I believed to Hillington fair, and he has never been back since."

The man looked grave; there was something convincing in the poor woman's words and manner.

"That's cur'ous," he said, "I've got no call to think you aint tellin' of the truth; but I sure and certain see him with Master Mills, comin' from this very pike."

"Did he look bad; my poor Phil," asked the mother, trembling as she spoke.

"I tell ye," replied the waggoner, "he looked vicious-like; he'd got no care for nobody nor nothink, you may depend, or he'd never been and got took close to his home like this."

"Will it go hard with him, do you think, Master

Giles?" asked Mrs. Hartley in a low tone, and looking earnestly into the man's face.

"Rayther, I should say; but that aint the worst of it, it's what he'll be afterwards, after he's been to prison, and come out, when people points at him, and turns away from him, and he's got bitter, and more don't-care-like nor he be now, and full of prison tricks and ways; I tell ye, Mrs. Hartley," continued the waggoner, slowly shaking his head, "I've seen young lads took like this afore, and I've seen the endins of such, and there never was no good end as *I* could make out."

"Master Giles," said the mother with impressive earnestness, "I don't believe it will be so with my Phil; all that comes from our Blessed Lord is good, and I'm going to take this trouble as good; and it's my belief Phil will come through it all like gold tried in the fire."

"You women are too much for me," remarked the waggoner, as he prepared to move on; "a deal too much; and you mothers is worser nor all; there aint no arguing with any of ye, so I'll wish ye good morning, Mrs. Hartley, and well out of this here trouble;" and he cracked his whip, and walked off by the side of his waggon.

"Do it rain?" asked Granny, when her daughter after closing the door, came up to the fire to stir it.

"Yes, mother; and I fear it'll last all day."

"And Phil don't come back;" muttered the old woman, "he'll get wet through, and have a fever, and die; Jane, do you hear?"

"Yes, mother; but I hope it'll not be so bad as that; you mustn't worry, mother, or you'll get ill."

"I'm getting ill, Jane; I'm getting quite sure they'll catch our Phil, and shut him up in the jail, and when they does that, I shall just die of the shame; who was you talking to just now? was you talking of Phil?"

"I was talking to Master Giles," replied Jane; "he's got a wet journey before him, and his waggon was heavy loaded; he won't be back before late to-night, I daresay; there's someone else coming now, I believe."

Thus evading the second part of her mother's question, Jane went to the door, and was greatly relieved to find that it was a stranger this time, who merely paid his toll and rode on.

With such intermissions as these the morning dragged slowly away until about noon, when, Jane being absent in the outer kitchen, Granny was startled by the abrupt opening of the door, and the entrance of Mr. Inspector Mills.

"He's took;" cried the old woman, in a high, shrill voice, before the officer had time to utter a word; "our Phil's took to the jail, and shut up, and punished for what he never did; aint he now? say—why don't ye speak?"

"You haven't given me a chance of speaking yet," returned the Inspector; "but it seems to me you know all about it."

Granny shrank down in her chair at these words, with her head bent low on her bosom, and her feeble, trembling hands fallen helplessly on her lap. Jane had heard and seen the arrival, and now with a sadly pale face came forward to hear the worst.

"Mrs. Hartley," began the officer, "from information I received this morning, I came down to the pike to take your son Philip in charge; he was just about making off I could see, but he'd left it too long; I came up just in time; I suppose he'd been saying 'good-bye?'"

"No;" replied the poor woman in low, but perfectly clear tones; "we've seen nothing of Phil to-day, nor yesterday neither; he went away the morning before, and said he was going to Hillington fair; since then we haven't seen or heard nothing of

him, till Master Giles told me this morning he saw him being took to jail by you."

The Inspector looked very doubtful, and slightly shook his head.

"Ah," he said at length, and as he spoke he drew near the fire and Granny, so that the old woman, who he knew was deaf, could distinctly hear what was passing; "Ah, Mrs. Hartley, mothers always stand fast by their boys; but how do you account for your son being taken at the very door of his home, and you knowing nothing about it?"

"I can only say what I know," replied Jane meekly, "Phil has often threatened to run away to sea, and I've been afraid till this morning that he'd really gone; but when Master Giles went through, and told me what he'd seen—"

The poor woman suddenly stopped, overcome by her feelings.

"You thought of Farmer Wilson's barns and stacks, eh?" remarked the Inspector.

"No, Master Mills;" replied Jane, gathering fresh courage from her hidden source of strength; "I'm quite sure Phil had nothing to do with the burning of those stacks; but you've seen him—you've asked him all about it, I daresay; Phil's a bold boy, and will tell the truth."

The police officer evidently had his own opinion on this subject, but it was one at which he had had no small difficulty to arrive, considering that Phil had not spoken one word since he had taken him in charge.

"Now, look here, Mrs. Hartley;" continued the Inspector; "and you too," he added, drawing a chair close to Granny, and sitting down; "you had better tell me all you know about Philip's goings and doings since the day before yesterday. I may as well let you know at once that I've got quite enough evidence to convict him, and I must say it seems to me idle that you should persist in declaring you know

nothing whatever of his movements, when I took him at this very door. Are you attending to me?" he paused to ask Granny, for she began murmuring unintelligible sounds, her eyes had wandered from his face to the little lattice through which the clouds, in their gray dreariness, were still seen to be weeping mournfully.

"Are you listening to what I say?" repeated the Inspector.

Granny slowly turned her dim eyes upon him—very dim they were, with a strange film creeping over them as though she were becoming blind.

"Phil's took to jail—and shut up—and punished—for what he never did—aint that what you said?"

The old woman had uttered these words with much difficulty.

The officer shook his head, and was about to speak again, when Jane interposed.

"You'd best not talk to mother, Master Mills;" she said, "you'd best tell me all you've got to say; old people are like children, you know, they don't understand."

"Well then, Mrs. Hartley," continued the Inspector—but at this point Granny rose, and for a few moments the flickering flame of life within her reasserted itself, and burnt steadily.

"I feel it bitter, Master Mills;" she said in steady tones; "I can't bear the shame of it; us poor folk has got our pride the same as rich folk, and some of us can't bear disgrace as well as others. I feel it all here hard and bitter;" (and Granny touched her heart as she spoke,) "and I feel it cold here too, dead cold. I'd like to be took to my bed, Jane, and die;" and with unfaltering tread the old woman turned from the fire, and walked into the adjoining room; but there was something in her look and manner as she did so, which evidently struck the observant officer, who, telling Jane he would call again in the course of a day or two, rose and left the house.

CHAPTER IV.

PHIL'S FRIENDS.

THE autumn sun rose bright and clear the morning after Phil had been arrested by Inspector Mills, drying and mellowing the clustering fruit, streaming and wavering through the long, park glades surrounding Oakleigh Hall, the residence of Squire Hazelwood.

So high the old Elizabethan house stood on the rising ground far back from the high road, that the view of exquisite scenery which was to be obtained from it, comprehended many miles of country. To the right, the Reefland Woods stretched far away, the autumn tints on their wealth of trees becoming one vast kaleidoscope of changing lights in the glittering sunshine; while to the left, the Surrey hills, beautiful in outline, their white, chalk soil gleaming out here and there from the deep, green covering of brake, and heath, and grass, wound along the valley farther than the eye could reach in one unbroken sweep. Immediately in front of the house and park, a wild furze-grown heath, or as the country people called it, the Harewood Common, spread its fantastic beauty before the delighted eye. A heath for kelpies and fairies, and other fanciful inhabitants of the childrens' world.

The Squire's wife had been dead some time when our story opens, and the little daughter she left behind was now twelve years old. She had been brought up by her father's sister, who had resided at the Hall ever since the death of Mrs. Hazelwood. This lady was past middle age, and her once dark brown hair was gradually changing into gray; the hazel eyes too, though full of love and sympathy, were dimmer than they used to be; but the pale, soft face

had very few lines, and the kindly mouth was always ready to smile on little children, or to utter words of comfort and pity to weary, aching hearts.

A very different character was her brother, the Squire; stern, unyielding, with a high sense of honour, and a strict love of justice, he was, perhaps, peculiarly fitted for the position he held as one of the magistrates for the county. Many a poor delinquent, whether his misdemeanour were great or small, felt all hope for mitigation of his punishment fade like the morning mist, when he beheld himself arraigned before the dreaded Squire Hazelwood.

It was only natural then that poor Jane's heart should sink, when, on this bright autumn morning, she was told by several passers-by that Phil was to be examined that day in the Court-house at Hillington before the Squire.

In the meantime, several fruitless attempts had been made by the ladies at the Hall, with whom the poor lad was somewhat of a favourite, to make an impression in his favour. But they argued weakly, as ladies are apt to do, and in the end were fain to own to themselves that, with the exception of great natural goodness of heart, and a fearlessness almost approaching to boldness in telling the truth, Phil had won for himself by his reckless conduct an unenviable notoriety in the village. They dwelt much, however, on his truthfulness, (a feature in his character of which the Squire was not disposed to take much cognizance, since he believed it had its origin rather in the natural boldness of his disposition than in any deep-rooted principle, and for that reason was the more likely to fail him in any great emergency, such as the present.)

And, undoubtedly, there was grave cause for suspicion of his being the author of the fire. Only three days before, Farmer Wilson had given him a sound thrashing for a wanton piece of mischief,

whereby a valuable horse had been lamed, and the boy was heard by several people to threaten the farmer with a terrible revenge, which he not only expressed whilst smarting under his well-deserved punishment, but many times afterwards, when it might be supposed his anger had subsided.

In the face of such unprepossessing facts, it was vain to urge that Phil was a kindly lad, that he led old Blind Kathy, who lived down by the water-mill, to church every Sunday, and ran her errands, and scrubbed her floor; that hour after hour, on bright sunny days, he carried about in his strong arms, Ned Sawyer's little crippled brother Ben; the Squire was not a man to judge by the general lines of character, he knew nothing was more deceptive, and when persons appealed to such as an indication of innocence, he considered their doing so equivalent to an admission of guilt. That it was not always so, he was willing to allow, but the exceptions were rare, and therefore, not permitting himself to be swayed in the least degree by either his sister or his daughter, he drove to Hillington in his most inflexible mood.

"Granny was dying;" a young woman told him at the toll-gate, as he stopped for a minute to inquire if Jane were going to the Court-house—it was not likely she would live through the day, and they had sent to the Rector to come and administer the last solemn Rite of the Church. Phil's evil deed was rich in its fruit already.

The Squire's carriage was hardly out of sight before a gentleman might be seen walking from the opposite direction, along the pleasant highway. He was, perhaps, nearer seventy than sixty years of age, yet the langour of his step was more owing to confirmed ill-health, than to actual infirmity. His face, with its finely-moulded features, was very handsome, but it was the extreme beauty of the countenance that made most impression on the beholder. There

was in its general expression not only pure benevolence, but a great, comprehensive love, as though it had caught some dim reflection of the Divine Face when turned on Jerusalem. Iron-gray, waving hair shaded a forehead which equally denoted intellect, goodness, and truth; the eyes were blue, and finely-shaped, but constant physical suffering had faded their once vivid beauty; the delicate outline of the nose was almost Grecian, and the perfectly-cut mouth with its many sensitive curves, was rendered completely masculine by a square, massive chin. A complexion, delicate and pure as that of a young girl, added much to the native refinement of his face; while his bearing had the stateliness peculiar to high birth, and his presence was that of one accustomed to command.

The young woman at the toll-house, who had been anxiously looking along the road ever since the Squire's carriage had disappeared, having apparently satisfied herself of the identity of the gentleman slowly approaching, retreated into the inner room, where Granny was awaiting the Great Deliverer, Death, and whispered to Jane:

"There's Mr. Lyle, the Rector, coming along the road; shall he come straight in here?"

"Yes;" replied Jane, who was bending over the dying woman, moistening her lips with a little brandy and water; she spoke in the same hushed tones.

The girl went out, and met the clergyman just coming in at the door.

"Well, Fanny," was his kindly greeting, after he had invoked Peace on the humble dwelling, "so you are helping poor Jane Hartley in her heavy trouble; it is a blessed work, my child; in bearing one another's burdens, we are fulfilling the law of Christ, doing as He used to do, you know; and the Master is always pleased when we follow His Holy Footsteps."

The young woman curtsied as the Rector came

into the room, and a flush of pleasure rose to her face as she listened to his kind, encouraging words.

"I can't do much for poor Jane, Sir;" she said, "only just bide here to take the tolls; her heart's well-nigh broken with Granny dying so sudden, and Phil's being taken to prison."

"Her cross is heavy, truly," returned the Rector, in a saddened voice; "poor Jane."

"It isn't that she complains at all, Sir;" continued Fanny, "she never says anything hard and bitter, but I know she's always thinkin', and it seems to me too as if she's waiting for something that will never come."

The Rector shook his head.

"You are wrong, Fanny;" he replied, "what Jane is waiting for *will* come; the Master has promised deliverance and help to all who go to Him in sore distress, and He will not fail Jane. Can I go in now, do you think?"

He motioned with his hand towards the bedroom door, as he was speaking.

"Oh, yes, sir;" said the girl, ushering him into the adjoining apartment, as she replied.

Granny was moaning feebly, a few inarticulate sounds escaped her, and some broken sentences; Jane was trying to comfort her with endearing words.

"The Master's—forsook—me," the old woman was endeavouring to say. "He knows—I—aint been—humble—He knows—I've—thought too—much of bein'—honest—and havin'—a—good name, and now—I'm—sorry—it aint—no good."

"Yes, my poor soul, it is very good for you to be sorry;" said the Rector, bending over her, and speaking in low, comforting tones; "the victory is half won when we are sorry for our faults; and the Master has not forsaken you; He has sent you this sad trial to bring you nearer to Himself; He has sent it in love to your soul; your poor heart has sunk

beneath this heavy cross, and your poor body is ready to crumble into the dust of Death; but angels are waiting to bear *you*, that is, your precious soul, to Paradise, where rest the saints of God, who, in due time, will exalt both them and you in the Kingdom of the Just."

"But—I'm not—fit—to go," urged Granny, "there—aint—no time—to shew the Lord—how humble—I feel—and how sorry—I am."

"But you can trust yourself to His safe keeping," said the Rector softly; "and He knows how sincere your sorrow is, and how you have striven to serve Him all your days, though you have greatly sinned in priding yourself on the honest life you have led; but that is past now; you repent of your sin, and the Blessed Saviour forgives you, washes your soul in His most Precious Blood, and will set you faultless before the Throne of Grace. Do you feel comforted now?"

"Yes," said Granny, "they was—the words—I've been—waitin'—to hear—the Master—aint—forsook me—He's comin'—quite—close, I feel—He is—and He'll come—quite close—to Jane—and Phil"—(here there was a long pause;) "Pray—for—me," added Granny in a still weaker voice.

Then the Rector, kneeling by the bedside, offered up the beautiful prayers of the Church for the departing soul, and administered the Holy Communion, which highest and holiest Service being over, he told Jane that he was now going on to the Court-house at Hillington, and would call in on his return to let her know how matters were likely to go with Phil.

"I dare not give you much hope;" he added, "but rest assured our Good God will never forsake him."

With these words, the Rector passed from the darkened room out into the autumn sunshine, and pursued his way to Hillington.

CHAPTER V.

THE GREAT LIE.

MEANWHILE affairs in the Court-house were not bearing a very favourable aspect for poor Phil, nor had the manner of the lad in any way effaced the bad impression already made on the magistrates and bystanders, but on the contrary, deepened it. For his countenance was dark and sullen, and his mouth rigidly fixed, not a word passed his lips, not a single contradiction of any one of the serious charges brought against him. Stolid indifference to all that was going on seemed to have taken possession of him, and he looked, as Master Giles would have expressed it, more "don't-care and vicious-like than ever."

Evidence given by witnesses, whose veracity was unquestionable, had already been adduced before the arrival of Mr. Lyle; but still it had been purely circumstantial, no one had actually seen him commit the crime.

Deepdale Farm, the property of a large landowner in the adjoining parish, and rented of him by Farmer Wilson, was situated mid-way between Oakleigh and Hillington, on the right hand side of the high road, going towards London. It was the largest farm for many miles round, and its area had considerably increased since the farmer had attached to it some extensive hop-grounds. It was now the height of the hopping-season, and a great number of the poorest and most wretched of the population of our great metropolis had congregated as usual on the Deepdale Farm, and indeed almost swarmed the country round.

The inquiry at the Court-house was just about to be adjourned to give time for collecting further evi-

dence, when simultaneously with the arrival of Mr. Lyle, Inspector Mills produced a witness from among this band of squalid invaders, with the air of a man who has just put the finishing stroke to a rather complicated piece of business.

The new-comer was a type of many of his class always to be found in certain quarters of the great city—wretched, ragged, and with a general indication of disease and want; clearly one of Misery's own. The lad, for he was no more, was about the same age as Phil, fourteen years; but the expression in his dark, sunken eyes, was that of a person double his age, and his lank hair, and cadaverous visage, gave him a still more weird and unhealthy appearance.

"What was his name?"

"Jimmy," was the prompt response, but he immediately corrected himself, and added "James Stokes."

"Did he understand the nature of an oath?" he was asked by the magistrates' clerk, who did not rgeard this off-scouring of London with much favour.

Inspector Mills here informed the bench that he had made most careful inquiries respecting the witness, that he (the lad before them) thoroughly understood the serious nature of the offence of which the prisoner was charged, and the effect such important evidence as his would have upon the case.

The examination of the witness then commenced.

"You say your name is James Stokes; where do you live?"

"In London; top-floor back, No. 18, Goldacre Alley, Grim Street, Whitechapel Road."

"How old are you?"

"Fourteen year."

"Have you a father?"

"Yes."

"And a mother?"

"Yes."

"What do they do for a living?"

"Anythink they can."

The Squire frowned, and his dark eyes kindled; he looked at the boy, who met his piercing glance unflinchingly.

"You must remember where you are, and before whom you are speaking," he said sternly.

The question was then repeated.

"What do they do for a living?"

"Father aint got no regular work, he's only just a help; he hangs outside the dock-gates, lookin' for anythin' stray, and sometimes he does a bit of tailorin', not often though; such as us never wants much of that."

"And your mother?"

"She goes about with creases, and red herrins, and this time of year we all goes hoppin'."

The Squire could not quite reconcile the trade of tailoring, which does not require much physical power, with the hard, manual exertion required of a dock-labourer; he expressed as much to the witness.

"Ah, but he aint no reg'lar dock-labourer, the reg'lar ones aint such as us; he only hangs about the gates, and when ships come home and the sailors is off, he goes aboard and helps unload, and that sort; there's a lot of broken-down —"

Here the magistrates' clerk checked his discursiveness, and asked him if he had any brothers or sisters.

"No, there aint only me left; five of us died of the cholery, mother took the cholery too, but she didn't die, worse luck."

Again a rebuke from the Squire and a searching look, but the boy was ready with his answer:

"Well, she's always wantin' to die; she goes about cryin' and wishin' she'd be took."

"Have you ever seen the prisoner before?"

"Yes, often, when I've been down hoppin'."

"When did you see him last?"

"Tuesday night, about seven o'clock."

"Where?"

"He was slyin' round the wheat-stacks and thrashin' barns up at the Deep-Dale."

Jimmy pronounced the last word with an equal emphasis on each syllable.

"What were you doing?"

"I was goin' up from the hop-grounds to fetch somethin' for father."

"What were you going to fetch?"

"Beer."

"From the ale-house, or the homestead?"

"From the ale-house."

"What was the prisoner doing?"

"He was slyin' along, and peepin' here and there to see, I s'pose, as no one was watchin' him; and when he gets close to the wheat-stacks, he strikes a match and sets light to one corner, and then he goes on strikin' more matches, and lightin' other parts of the stacks, and then the blaze jumped up sudden, and he run away."

"Did you call out, or try to stop him?"

"I run a goodish way after him, and called out, 'fire,' and 'stop, thief,' and all that sort, but I couldn't catch him, and he made off cross country, London ways."

"What did you do then?"

"I went straight back and told father, and he went and called the police, and t'other folk."

There was a pause, the clerk appeared to reflect a few moments, then turning suddenly on the witness, he said:

"And you swear all this to be true?"

"Yes," replied Jimmy, with the same readiness that had characterized him throughout the examination.

There was another pause, but it was this time broken by the prisoner.

It had been remarked by those assembled in the Court-house, that ever since the appearance of Jimmy as a witness, Phil's stolid indifference had been gradually vanishing. A keen intelligence had superseded the dark, sullen expression of his brow and eyes, the rigid lips were parted, and a quick, panting sound escaped them as though he laboured under some great excitement.

"You lie," he said fiercely, looking the witness full in the face for the space of a few moments, who bore the ordeal remarkably well; then he slowly turned his gaze all round the Court-house, and a sense of the helplessness of his condition seemed to roll over him like a great wave, for the light faded from his eyes, and the colour from his cheeks as only hostile faces met his view; the dark frown and stolid indifference resumed their sway over his countenance, and he awaited in gloomy silence the conclusion of the proceedings.

The inquiry had already lasted three hours, but the Squire exhibited no signs of flagging energy, he appeared bent on sifting the case thoroughly, and wherever only the shadow of a doubt presented itself, he allowed Phil the benefit of it, and was unwilling to pass anything over lightly that might tell in his favour.

But in the end, he and his brother magistrates arrived at the unanimous opinion that a complete case had been made out, and that there was no other course to pursue but to commit Philip Hartley to the County Jail to take his trial for arson at the next Lent Assizes. Bail was offered by the Rector, but after grave consideration it was refused, and all the witnesses having been bound over, the proceedings terminated, and the assembly slowly dispersed.

With some difficulty Mr. Lyle made his way through the crowd towards the little group of police officers which surrounded Phil. The boy looked

strangely pale, but the dark, sullen expression had given place to a frightened look, the Rector thought, though the mouth was still rigid.

"Poor lad, poor Philip," he said low and hurriedly, "but God will care for you; He will not forsake you utterly."

"God aint taking care of me now," replied Phil sullenly, "He seems quite gone away."

"For a little time, perhaps, my child; but with great mercies He will gather you; He has promised to do so, and His promise never fails. Trust in him, and pray to Him day and night, and all will end well yet. I shall soon come and see you, but now I must go to your poor mother, and talk with her of what is best to be done—God bless you, my poor boy, God bless and keep you;" and with dim eyes and unequal footsteps, the Rector turned hastily away, and hurried out of the Court-house.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MASTER COMES.

Blue, thin, autumn mist hanging over the Reefland Woods, and the heath-covered Surrey hills; the red sun gone to his rest, leaving behind in the sky a track of fast-fading splendour; the evening shadows gathering quickly in the valley, and turning all things gray.

Jane Hartley, sitting by the bedside of Granny, who was still hovering between life and death, felt that shadows had gathered quickly in her little home, and that there was no hope of their dispersing. Many tongues had brought the news of Phil's committal to the toll-house, and Jane had heard it

meekly from Fanny, though with a dread sinking at the heart, as though the light had gone out of her soul.

In a sudden, overwhelming trial how often do the most faithful Christians lose their belief in a Divine Power, or rather, in the Infinite Compassion and Mercy of a God they have been taught to regard as a God of Love. When "all the workers of iniquity do flourish," and the followers of the Cross are put to open shame, and subjected to the revilings of their neighbours, and the scorn of the world, well may the unbeliever ask, "Where is now their God?" "Waiting to be gracious," is the response of every faithful soul, waiting until the soldier has proved himself worthy of his Captain, until the battle-field is strewn with the enemies of his salvation; and then the Judge will come forth as the sun in its strength and smite the evil-doer, and cast the unrepentant wicked, and all who make a lie, into the nethermost hell.

But the righteous shall flourish as a palm tree; they shall no longer sit within the Shadow of the Cross, but follow the Lamb wheresoever He goeth in the Realms of the Blessed; for in going through the vale of misery, they use it for a well; they drink of the Brook in the Way; and infirmities, reproaches, necessities, persecutions, distresses, endured for Christ's sake, enable them to go from strength to strength; and unto the God of gods appeareth every one of them in Sion.

But the time had not come yet for Jane Hartley to say, "the Lord is waiting to be gracious;" she was in that stage of tribulation when the soul acknowledges God's *Power* to help and save, but doubts His *Willingness;* she did not remember that He ever chastens those He loves, but rather accepted her present trial as a wrathful visitation of the Mighty One, and so sank beneath the overwhelming

load, not an unbeliever, but a passive endurer of, to what seemed to her, Omnipotent oppression.

For which one of the great human family but has felt the same when smarting under that hardest to be borne of all trials, injustice? Who has not cried out with the Psalmist, when, forsaken by the world, all appeals to the Infinite Truth seem of no avail, "Will the Lord absent Himself for ever: and will He be no more intreated? Is His mercy clean gone for ever: and is His promise come utterly to an end for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious: and will He shut up His loving kindness in displeasure?" It is often very long before we can recognise that "it is our own infirmity" which delays the relief we so ardently desire; we have not patience to wait God's time; we have not faith in His promises; we have not love to cry "shall we receive good at the Hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil;" we cannot take all He sends with perfect trust in His Divine Goodness; our human nature is weak, and there are times when we cannot rise above it.

And so in the gray twilight, Jane Hartley sat in her passive misery by the bedside of Granny. The old woman had not spoken for the last hour or two, her eyes had been closed, and she had laboured painfully to breathe, but now a ray of intelligence passed over her countenance, and she essayed to speak.

"I've been—dreamin' Jane," she said, "I've been sittin'—down—by a—great river—and the waters—was black—and come—a'most—right—over me,—and I—was—awful—frightened—Jane—till I—see on—the other—side—a—Light—shinin'—and it—shined—and shined—brighter—and—brighter— till —at last—I see—a Man—standin'—all in—the Light—and His Face—was—like—the pictures—in our great—Bible—of the—dear Lord—and I—see His Hands—stretched—out—to me—and there was

the—nail—marks—in them—and—and—I'm forgettin'—Jane—can't—you—see the—Light—too?"

But Jane had only seen the Rector come softly into the room as soon as Granny had commenced speaking.

"Wasn't It—the—Blessed Christ?" asked the old woman, after a short pause; "what's them—words—of David's—?"

"'He shall send down from on high to fetch me: and shall take me out of many waters,'" said Mr. Lyle in his low, clear voice.

Granny smiled. "He—never—breaks—His—word—do He?" she said with some difficulty.

"Never; His promises of old are faithfulness and truth."

There was a longer pause, then Granny essayed once more to speak.

"Phil's—in—deep waters," she said, "and—Jane—too,—but—nothin's—too—deep—for the—dear—Lord,—heights—and depths—and—you—know—Master—"

"Yes," replied the Rector, "His Power and Love can reach everywhere; Philip and Jane are in His holy keeping; they must be prayerful, and patient, and soon their Lord will come in His sweet Compassion and deliver them out of their distresses."

Once again Granny smiled; the shadows were deepening in the room, and Jane made a movement as though to get a light; but Mr. Lyle stopped her by raising his hand, for the smile on the old woman's face was giving place to a darker shadow than any around them, the Shadow of Death.

"The Master is come, and calleth for thee," said the Rector softly, bending over Granny, and speaking very distinctly, though he almost feared she had passed beyond the hearing of his words.

A short struggle, as the earthly fetters fell away from the enfranchised soul, a faint sigh, as this

mortal hastened to put on immortality, then once again the glorious smile, as though the reflection of the Light on the opposite Shore of the Dark River had fallen on the dying face; thus the spirit of Granny rose with trembling faith, and went out to meet its Lord; and then was brought to pass the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory."

Jane remained passive by the bedside, she knew all was over, but her tribulation was too sore to find expression in tears or words. She could hear the voice of the Rector praising and blessing God for that it had pleased Him to deliver his aged servant from this present evil world, and had taken her soul, as is the hope of every Christian, to the Rest of the faithful departed. They were gracious and holy words, and intended for her comfort, she somehow felt, but the Being to Whom they were addressed seemed a long way off; oh! such a long, long way, now Phil was gone to the prison, and Granny numbered amongst the dead. Yet the Rector prayed on in the darkening room in perfect faith and hope, for he remembered the promise of the Righteous One when He said, "I will cause the shower to come down in his season: there shall be showers of blessing."

Meanwhile, for the last half-hour, Fanny had been holding serious converse at the turnpike-gate—old Master Giles had come up from Hillington with his waggon, and found her sitting on the toll-house step, struggling vainly to check her falling tears.

"What's ye cryin' for, my girl?" he asked, paying the toll in his usual deliberate manner, dropping the half-pence into the girl's extended hand as though they were coins of priceless worth; "red eyes aint pretty."

"Oh, Mast' Giles, don't talk so light; Granny's dyin' fast, and Phil's sent off to jail, and there's only misery everywhere."

Master Giles shook his head doubtfully.

"That aint nat'ral talk for a young girl like you," he said, "the old woman may take a turn for the better yet, who knows? but that Phil—(here the head was shaken ominously)—he's a bitter weed that young lad is too."

"Oh, he's not so bad, Mast' Giles, as people make out; everybody wants to think ill of him because he's a tiresome boy, and has done a few wrong things; why, people's heaping everything wicked on to him now; but as to Granny, she'll never take a turn for the better, she can't live out the night, the doctor says; and the Rector's here now; oh, aint it hard for Jane, Mast' Giles?"

The waggoner screwed up his mouth and brow and looked thoughtful.

"Very hard—very hard it is too," he said after a few moments, "but I didn't think the old woman was going off so sudden; what was it shook her, eh?"

"Oh, Phil's being took; she couldn't bear the shame; she's so old too."

"Ah," said the waggoner, "pride always has a fall; but she were a good sort too, poor old soul. Well, my girl, it's what we must all come to someday, the best and the worst of us."

"But it's very awful, isn't it?" said the girl.

"What?" asked Master Giles.

"Death," replied Fanny solemnly, "leaving everybody, and going away into another world all alone."

"Leavin' everybody, I s'pose, aint very cheering," remarked the waggoner, "but as to t'other world, I aint so sure as some people are about it; I rayther think it's all talk, and nobody rayly knows nothin' about it."

"Oh, Master Giles," cried Fanny, quite shocked, "you go to church, don't you?"

"No, I don't, nor to chapel nayther; I s'pose you think I ought?"

"I should love you to come to our church here at Oakleigh," said the girl earnestly, "and say our beautiful prayers along of us, and hear Mr. Lyle tell us what the Bible means; and he tells us what the Prayer-Book means too, and he says it all so easy, even the little children understand; oh, I should love you to come, Mast' Giles."

"Maybe I'll look in some-day," said the waggoner thoughtfully, "I've heerd talk afore of your Rector out here, and he's a nice gentleman to speak to any-hows; but I don't know as I altogether hold with them clergy pretendin' to know such a sight more about t'other world nor we do; it's only because they's eddicated, and we poor folk aint."

"Oh, don't say that, Mast' Giles; the Bible hasn't anything to do with us bein' educated, It is God's own message to us all, and the clergy only tell us what they read in It, and some things we can't understand they make plain to us; oh, Mast' Giles, if folks only went to church a little more than they do, they'd know quite as much about the other world, and our Blessed Lord, and His promises, as the clergy know, and then there wouldn't be so much wickedness everywhere."

"My good girl," said the waggoner in his most deliberate manner, "if you'd lived as long as me in this here world, you'd know there's a deal of folk as goes to church continual as is a sight more wickeder nor us as always stops away; they lies, they cheats, they drinks, they bears false witness, they does and says things as is injurious to their neighbours, (and these aint all poor folk, mind ye), and they always seems to me to get on well. Now, I aint one as says, 'Don't go to church, you'll learn nowt there,' I likes people to do what they's inclined, but I don't like double-dealin' nohows; I don't like folks pretendin' to be what they aint; I lives honest, and I don't go to church, and the fellow next door to me

goes constant, and he's a downright rogue—now there."

Master Giles extended both his hands, and looked at Fanny as much as to say, "Now what can you say to that?"

The girl seemed puzzled and sorrowful; after a moment or two, she said:

"I don't know how to talk to you, Mast' Giles; of course you know more about folks than I do, but I can't help thinkin' you're wrong somewhere, I'm sure if you were talkin' to Mr. Lyle you'd find you were wrong, and you'd come to believe all he'd tell you, the same as I do, I feel sure you would."

The waggoner shook his head with much deliberation.

"You women are so soft," he said at length, "you believes anythink; well, tell the missis I'm uncommon sorry she's in such trouble, she's a good sort, that Mis' Hartley is; good-night, my girl, and don't take on too much;" and then Master Giles urged on his horse, and the waggon rolled slowly along the road.

Fanny followed him wistfully with her sad eyes a few moments, prayerfully wishing the day might soon come when her old friend should "look in" at Oakleigh church, and that that "looking in" might lead to his coming often, and receiving the Message of Salvation from the servant of the Lord, her loved and honoured Rector; and then, who could tell? Master Giles might come to have no doubts at all about the Promised Rest, and undying happiness of that other world, he might come to sit down at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, and to stand faultless before the Throne of Grace, washed in the Precious Blood, and he might—but here Fanny was roused from her prayerful thoughts by Mr. Lyle coming out of the sleeping apartment of the toll-house, and softly closing the door behind him.

"It is all over, my child," he said gently, answering the anxious look in the girl's face, as she turned from the step to meet him; "the Master has been and taken His servant Home; nay, do not fret, Fanny, we should rather rejoice that her pilgrimage is over, and that pain and sorrow can come near her no more."

"But it's Jane," sobbed Fanny, "I'm thinking of most; poor Jane, left all alone."

"Ah, poor Jane," said the Rector softly, "you must try and comfort her, my child, for her heart is sorely wounded; you must tell her of the Gracious Promises, of Him Who will yet seek out her and her poor boy, and 'deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.'"

"I'll do my best, I will indeed, Sir, but Jane knows more than I do."

"Never mind that, my child, she will be very glad to hear what you can tell her, I daresay; we can all learn from one another; the very poorest of my people teach me sometimes; but now I think poor Jane will want you to help her, and so good-night, my child."

Thus saying, the Rector took up his hat, and quietly left the house.

CHAPTER VII.

THE GREAT LIE PROSPERS.

Later on in the evening, when the remains of poor Granny had been decently prepared for their last earthly home, Jane and Fanny were sitting by the bright, little fire of the toll-house, both very

silent, and apparently lost in thought. The events of the last few days had succeeded each other so rapidly, and had had such startling results, that the mind of the former was incapable of dwelling on anything but the two bare facts that Granny was dead, and Phil miles and miles away in the County Jail.

Fanny regarded her now and again very wistfully, longing to speak some words of comfort, but not knowing exactly what to say.

"I know you feel kindly for me, Fanny," said Jane at last, as taking her hands from her eyes she met the anxious gaze of her companion fixed on her, "I daresay many people feel kind, and the Blessed Lord kinder than all, but His Hand is heavy on me just now, and I'm not able to look up," and as Jane finished speaking she hid her face as before.

"But you'll try, won't you?" asked Fanny softly, "I heard the Rector say once he had known people live to thank God for the heaviest troubles He'd ever sent them; p'raps, Jane, *you'll* be thanking God someday for this trouble that's now so hard."

"Maybe," said Jane drearily, "I know we ought to thank the Lord for all He chooses to send, but somehow I can't think at all to-night, nor pray neither; it seems as if God had gone quite away, and didn't mind at all about my trouble."

"I've heard Mr. Lyle say," remarked Fanny timidly, "that we ought to 'count it all joy' to be like the Blessed Christ in all things, and in His Sufferings most of all; and Jane, I can't help thinking that you're like Him to-night, like Him, you know, when He cried out on the Cross 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me;' and so, Jane, I'm *quite* sure He's watching over you now, and will go on watching and loving till all the trouble's gone. There's a hymn we used to sing last Lent keeps coming into my head, at least part of it;

I think these are the words," and Fanny pressed her hands to her forehead as she slowly repeated:

"Well I know thy trouble.
O My servant true,
Thou art very weary,
I was weary too;
But that toil shall make thee
Someday all Mine own,
And the end of sorrow
Shall be near My Throne."

"Aren't they beautiful words?" asked the girl after a short pause.

Jane took hold of her hand, and quietly pressed it. The two women understood each other.

"Mast' Giles came along to-night," said Fanny presently, "when Mr. Lyle was here, and he talked a goodish bit; he was uncommon sorry for you, he said —"

"But he wasn't sorry for Phil," interrupted Jane hastily.

"No, I don't think he was," replied the girl.

"Oh, that is so hard," cried the woman bitterly; "they say they're sorry for me, and they believe bad of my boy; and Fanny, I never will think he's done this wicked thing; I can't help thinking he'd really run away, and then repented and turned back, or how should he have slept the night before last up at Ryelands? If he hadn't been coming back, he'd have been further on the road than that; and then you tell me Ned Sawyer saw him up there; sure it wasn't him who told Master Mills he'd come along here?"

Jane asked this question searchingly.

"I'm quite sure he did'nt tell," replied Fanny unhesitatingly, "he's much too kind-hearted a lad; he said this morning I was the only creature he'd told about seeing him in the barn, and nothing should make him be a witness against Phil, and *I* shan't say anything about it, you're sure."

"But it'll go hard with him, Fanny, I'm afraid," said Jane reflectively; "it's going hard now; look, there's nearly six months before the Assizes comes on, and he'll be locked up in jail all that time; ah, it won't be my Phil when I see him again, he'll be really wicked then, maybe; Mast' Giles says it's what he'll be after he comes out that's the worst, when he's full of prison tricks and ways."

"Perhaps Mast' Giles won't be right," remarked Fanny quietly; "perhaps Phil will come out a better boy than ever he was before; why, Jane, you said so yourself yesterday."

"Yes, I know I did," replied Jane with a deep sigh, "but I feel so desponding to-night; I feel as if nothing bright could ever come to me again; so, Fanny, let's lie down now and get a little rest, maybe I shall feel better to-morrow."

And with another quiet pressure of each other's hand the two women sought the temporary bed they had made upon the floor, and found refuge from their dreary thoughts in sleep.

And how was Jimmy passing the same evening, after he had given such terrible evidence against a fellow-creature? Not at all in a manner inconsistent with the part he had played that day, which is to be accounted for in a measure by the fact that Inspector Mills was always to be seen hovering in his immediate vicinity, walking in and out the little groups of village admirers, (who had established the wretched hopper as a kind of hero), in his most stately and official manner, with his arms folded behind him, and his stiff stock, and white gloves looking very important.

Jimmy was standing with his father against the open door of a small cottage, or rather hut, which Farmer Wilson had allotted to them, and other of their squalid fraternity, as a night refuge during the hopping season. The father held in his right hand

a pewter mug filled with ale, while with his left, he alternately patted Jimmy's head, and pushed back the shaggy hair from his own brow, as he described with the discursiveness peculiar to his class his son's and his own exploits on the night of the fire.

At some little distance from them, with her back against the wall of the hut, and apparently paying no heed to what was passing around her, sat a woman, more miserably clothed, perhaps, than any of the wretched beings by whom she was surrounded. Her bonnet had fallen back from her head, which was bent low down on her bosom, whilst her fingers picked idly at the ragged fringe of her threadbare shawl. It was a sad face to look upon, for it's expression was drear in the extreme, and spoke only of utter misery and hopelessness. Inspector Mills approached her unobserved, and stood a few minutes silently regarding her.

"You don't take much notice of what your husband's saying, Missis," he remarked at length, looking down at her sideways.

The woman started, and shrank back closer against the wall, but she made no answer.

"Now," continued the Inspector, "I should have thought you would have been proud of your son over there; see how he helped to put out the fire the other night, and ran after the boy that did the mischief."

But the woman did not raise her head, and again made no reply; the idle action of her fingers had ceased, she twined them in the fringe of her shawl, and clenched her hands tightly together.

"Humph," said the Inspector, "you're one of the sulky sort, I suppose; haven't got a civil word to say to a body."

But as he ceased speaking, he knitted his brow, and bent his ear attentively downwards, for the woman was murmuring something.

"I haven't nothing to say," were the words he heard uttered in a low, hoarse voice.

"What! nothing to say about your boy being straightforward and honest?" urged the officer.

"Nothing," repeated the woman in the same hoarse tones.

"Well, you're not like most mothers," observed Mr. Mills, "but perhaps you've got something to make you feel dull; you've lost a good many children, haven't you?"

"Yes, thank God."

The Inspector stood amazed, the woman spoke so calmly.

"I was told you were always fretting for them," he said.

"I don't fret because they're dead," was the rejoinder, "but because I'm obliged to live; Death aint no punishment, Master."

The officer folded his arms, and leant against the wall of the hut.

"You lost five of them all of a sudden, didn't you?" he asked.

"Yes, they was all swep' away in one week."

"And you're not sorry?"

"Master," said the woman with sudden energy, raising her sunken eyes to the Inspector's face, "where I come from, the people aint like these as live in your village. Where I come from, there's murderers, and thieves, and liars, and drunkards, and there's fightin' and swearin' all day, and sometimes all night; children's best dead than growin' up to do the same."

"Well, I think you're right; but you would have brought up your children to better ways, I daresay; look at Jimmy, I'm sure he's a credit to you."

The woman's sudden energy died out, her head sank low on her bosom as before; Mr. Mills thought she had not heard what he said.

"Are you obliged to live with such a set of people?" he asked.

"Beggars can't be choosers, Master," was the reply; "such as us is glad to put our heads under any shelter; besides, we aint no better than others as I can see."

"Hulloa, Missis, supper 'll be late to-night, won't it?" shouted the woman's husband at this point of the conversation; he had been casting many furtive and anxious glances at her for the last ten minutes.

She slowly rose from the ground, and pulled her bonnet on to her head, then without speaking another word, or once meeting the keen glance of the Inspector, she walked slowly past him, and turned into the hut.

Gradually the evening shadows crept over the landscape, and as gradually the little groups of villagers dispersed to their several homes; the hoppers also retreated to the barns and huts which had been allotted them, to partake of their evening meal, and Inspector Mills turned his steps leisurely towards Hillington, reflecting as he went on the singularity of conduct the woman with whom he had been conversing had displayed; her utter indifference to the good opinion he, a police officer, had expressed of Jimmy, puzzling him the most.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MESSAGE BY THE WAY.

Master Giles had not journeyed above three hundred yards from the toll-gate before he was overtaken by the Rector.

"Fine evenin', Master," said the waggoner, touching his cap respectfully.

"Very fine, Giles" replied Mr. Lyle in his usual kindly manner; "I hope I see you well?"

"Nicely, Master, thank ye, nicely; I hope you're the same?"

"Well, Giles," and the Rector sighed wearily as he took off his hat, and passed his hand slowly over his brow, "I think I am very tired, and the day has been hot, and trying."

"Ah, I dessay; and I heerd as the Court-house at Hillington was downright crowded, all after that 'ere Phil Hartley as aint worth a straw."

Mr. Lyle looked very grave, almost severe, but the waggoner was not a parishioner of his, so he merely said:

"The lad is very young, and full of mischievous tricks; we were young once, Giles."

"Well, yes, we was," replied the man, looking as if the subject had never been presented to him in that light before; "still, Master, there aint no doubt but firin' them 'ere stacks was a downright wicked thing."

"Oh, most wicked; but don't you think there's a doubt as to it's being Phil who fired them?"

"Well, no, Master, I don't; the evidence, I heerd, was satisfyin' to the magistrates, and I've got no call to think it warn't true; still, mind ye, Master, I aint goin' to be surprised at anythin' I hear, for when them lawyers comes down at the 'Sizes, there's no knowin' what'll come of it, they in generally manages to make black white, and white black."

The Rector laughed.

"I must not come to you for compliments. I see, Giles," he said pleasantly; "but what should you say if I were to tell you that I do think there is great doubt about those stacks being fired by Philip Hartley, in short, that I believe him to be entirely innocent?"

"I don't know as I should say nothin'," remarked

the waggoner sententiously, his scepticism beginning to assert itself; "you clergy gentlemen is a sight more eddicated nor us poor, and so you always gets the best of any argyment; I don't say you're as bad as them lawyers though, they're downright bad uns, they are; why, they takes the truth straight out of your mouth, and then turns, and twists, and argyfys it, and last of all they holds your own words right up afore your face, and calls 'em a Lie! and by the time they've done doin' of all this you don't know whether they're right or wrong, and begin to think you've made a slip somewhere."

Again the Rector looked amused.

"I can't say you are altogether wrong," he observed, "but still you must remember that it is not in human nature to be all bad, there is a little good somewhere in everyone of us, mixed, unhappily, with a great deal of evil; and, Giles, lawyers are not the only people who can make black look white."

"Well, no, p'raps not, Master, but I just give them as specimens of what Might can do over Right; it's always them as is in power as gets the pull in this 'ere world."

"It certainly is very often the case," replied Mr. Lyle, "but power can be used for good as well as for evil, and when it *is* used for good the pull must be on the right side, Giles."

"Maybe, Master, maybe; I don't want to say there aint no good at all in this 'ere world, because if there warn't, there'd be no livin' anyhows, but what gets over me is, *why* there should be such a deal more wickedness nor goodness, and why the folks as does try to do what's right always seem to get the worst of it, and is forced to put up with prospects and promises of what they'll get in another world, which is a place as I've heerd a deal of talk on, but never could make out yet as folk know'd anythin' real about it."

The Rector no longer looked amused, but very serious.

"I fear you are not a churchman, Giles?" he said sadly.

"Well, no, Master, I aint, nor a chapel-goer naythor. That bit of a girl up at the pike, Fanny Lawson, was askin' of the same question as I come through just now; she's a good girl, that; but, lor, them women believes anythin', they *is* so soft."

"Giles," said the Rector, stopping suddenly, and looking his companion full in the face, "those weak, soft women who you say believe anything, will rise in the Judgment as accusers of the wise and clever men whose Reason shuts out from their souls the light of Faith. Fanny Lawson and Jane Hartley are good, simple-minded women, but I do not think they are so foolish as to believe *anything*. A Message has been sent them from God, and they have received it, and laid it to heart; the same Message has been sent to me, I have received it, and am grateful for it; and God has the same Message ready for you, Giles; will you hear it now? Life is short and uncertain, and the other world may be nearer you and me than either of us think. Shall I give you the Message?"

The gray, misty shadows on the landscape were slowly fading before the silvery light that was gradually stealing over hill and valley; trembling stars began to appear in the faint blue of the sky; the autumn breeze hardly stirred the leaves on the trees and hedges as it swept mildly over the meadows.

"Yes, Master, tell it," said the waggoner in a subdued voice, unconsciously removing his cap from his head as he spoke.

Then the Rector in a few simple words told the Story of the Great Love; of the fair and beautiful world made by the Gracious God for His human family; how Sin in Serpent's form had beguiled our

first parents into the awful Fall, the terrible effects of which must be felt until Time ends; how year by year, and age by age Evil so accumulated on the earth, was so heaped up against the Day of Wrath, that the very gates of Hell were yawning to engulph our guilty race; and then from that other world beyond the starlit sky, the City not made with hands, the Abode of the King in His Glory, came the Sinless Lamb of God, and taking on Himself the veil of human flesh, laid down His Life on the Cross to save our souls.

The waggoner drew a long breath as the Rector ceased speaking, and silently drew his hand once or twice over his eyes.

"Thank ye, Master," he said presently, "I've never heerd the like of that afore; I've heerd summut, you know, but it warn't told as you tells it; maybe I'll look in some day at the church along here, and hear you tell some more."

"Do Giles," said the Rector earnestly, "come whenever you like. Can you read?"

"Not very well, Master; not first-rate."

"Have you ever tried to read the Word of God, the Bible?" asked Mr. Lyle.

"Well, no, Master, I can't say as I have; I spells over the newspaper of Sundays most, and it aint much good I get out of that, for the news about Parlyment I don't rightly understand, the words is too hard and long, and they seems to me to be always talkin' and argyfyin', and never doin' nothin'. There's Sir Gilbert Larkins as put up for the county last August was a year, well, he comes to me down at my Master's, down at Winfell Mill, and he says to me, smilin' and talkin' pleasant, and that sort, 'You'll give me your vote at the election, won't ye?' 'Well, Sir Gilbert,' I says, 'I'd like first to know what you means to do when you gets into Parlyment; I'm a man of very few words, and looks most

at actions.' 'Well,' says he, 'I shall look after the peace of the country, and see as poor folks gets their rights, and labourers better wages; I'm the poor man's friend, I am,' he says. 'Well,' I says, 'Sir Gilbert, if you does all that, the sooner you're in Parlyment the better, so I'll give yer my vote;' and he gets into Parlyment at the very next election, and I looks in the papers every precious week as they comes round, and I've never seed his name once; he don't even talk as the others do. I says to my master one day, (I always calls him Master, though I owns part of the Mill now as much as him;) well, I says to him, 'labourers don't get better wages, nor poor folks their rights; what's Sir Gilbert Larkins after all this time?' 'Maybe, he's a listenin',' says Master, 'a goodish many on 'em only goes to listen; but I did hear as Sir Gilbert was seen one night in Parlyment to shake his head when they first talked about the 'Shanti war, and he's had more call to shake it since, I'm thinkin'.' So you see, Master," continued the waggoner, "newspapers aint very satisfyin' things to such as me. I reads a murder, and I says to myself, well, that's very dreadful, that is too, and the man, or the woman, whichever it may be, ought surely to be hanged; but who can tell as the party that's killed warn't the most aggravatin'? Then I reads of a fellow bein' sent to jail for beggin' in the streets for his wife and children; and in the same paper I reads of a woman, a teacher or some such, bein' found dead in a room from not havin' no food, starved to death. Then I puts the two together, and I says 'here's a man sent to jail because he begged for food, and here's a woman starved to death because she didn't beg;' and this sort of thing, Master, tho' it's easier to read nor the news about Parlyment, is a sight more harder to understand nor the long words and speeches. I'm always in doubt, Master, and that's the truth; and it strikes me if I

reads the Bible as you want me, I shan't come no better off nor I do with the newspapers."

The Rector had been listening very attentively to this long speech, alternately smiling and grave, but now with much earnestness he addressed his companion.

"Giles," he said, "I am able to promise you, that if you read the Bible as I shall direct, all that may at first sight be difficult to you in It, will be made plain. We poor mortals can do nothing right without the help of the Spirit of God; ask then for that Spirit as you open the Holy Book, and It will come and dwell within you, and give you an understanding heart."

"I like hearin' you speak, Master," remarked the waggoner in reply, "it sounds right somehows; it sounds as if you was believin' what you says; now folks in general says things they don't mean, and don't believe, and yet they want others to take in their words; now, I tell ye, Master, what I always says, if people wants to *convince me* of anythink, they must first be *convinced* themselves; aint that right, Master?"

"Perfectly right, Giles; therefore I do solemnly assure you that I believe every word of the Bible, from the first to the last, to come direct from God, and to be all Truth, even as He is Truth; and I also firmly believe that if you read It with the help of the Holy Spirit you will soon lose your doubts about that other world to which we are all hastening."

"Well, Master, I'll try it anyhows; somethin's made a good man of you, one can easy see; so I'll just think over what ye've been sayin', and come to church some of these fine days. How did ye leave the old woman at the pike, Master?"

They had by this time reached the Rectory gate, and Mr. Lyle laid his hand on the latch.

"In very safe keeping, Giles," he replied; "she

is, what the world calls, dead; but I would rather speak of her as one who rests in the Lord."

"Poor old soul," remarked the waggoner simply; "she were a good sort, a straight-forrard, honest, out-spoken old woman she were too; well, Master, I'm much obliged to ye for your nice talk comin' along, I'll think over it, I promise ye."

"Do, Giles; and if you find anything in your reading of the Bible that you cannot quite understand, just call in here as you are going by, and I daresay we shall be able to make it out together."

"Thank ye, Master, thank ye, kindly," said the waggoner, much gratified by this offer of the Rector, and again respectfully touching his cap; "I'll be glad to ask ye summut, I dessay; but now I'll wish ye a good night, Master, and many of 'em."

"Good night, Giles," said Mr. Lyle, and then he stood at the gate of the Rectory watching the retreating form of his humble friend until it was dim in the distance; wistfully watching, with much the same yearning in his soul that simple Fanny Lawson had had in her's respecting the free-thinking old waggoner, and as he walked slowly up his garden-path the prayer rose to his lips, "Let not the soul of this Thy servant, O Blessed One, be as the chaff which is cast into fire unquenchable, but rather let me find it in the Day of Thine appearing safe-stored as precious wheat in Thy Heavenly Garner."

CHAPTER IX.

PHIL IN THE PRISON.

Several weeks had passed away since Phil's committal to the county jail, and the event, though still fresh in the minds of the inhabitants of Oakleigh, was not regarded by them all in exactly the same light as it had been at first.

Perhaps the Rector's avowed belief in the boy's innocence went far to encourage a reaction in his favour; but it had also been noticed of late by observant persons, that Inspector Mills had become far more reticent on the subject than even his official capacity made it necessary for him to be.

For truly the worthy man, who was actuated solely by the solemn duty he had to perform to society, was getting sorely suspicious of the veracity of the wretched hopper, Jimmy. He had communicated with the metropolitan police, and had even, in company with a constable of the East-end district, penetrated to the "top-floor back, of No. 18, Goldacre Alley, Grim Street, Whitechapel Road." The result of his inquiries and investigations certainly did not tell much in favour of the principal witness against poor Philip Hartley. Jimmy was nothing more than a London street boy of the very lowest type, cunning beyond his years, old in wickedness, a consummate liar, and a well-known thief. His father was regarded even less favourably than he was by the officers of the police force in that district, having been convicted no less than eighteen times in seven years for petty larceny, drunken assaults, and other minor infringements of the law.

As to the woman, the mother, the opinion respecting her appeared to be unanimous. She was a wretched creature, seemingly lost to all recognition

of her rights as a member of the human family. She had formerly, and especially during part of the lifetime of the children that were dead, betrayed some signs of earlier respectability, had made futile attempts to send them to Sunday School, but the jeers of her husband and the scorn of the neighbours had proved too powerful for her feeble efforts, and she had succumbed to the misery around her as one paralysed by its immensity. She had nothing to say when the officers visited her in her dreary attic, nor did she discover any surprise that one of them should be the Inspector from Hillington. But for all this, the poor creature's manner was not offensive, it was more that of a person whose sensibilities had been blunted by continual harsh treatment, and contact with ever recurring evil.

And so Mr. Mills returned to Hillington, and reported to the Squire in private the unfavourable account he had received from his metropolitan brethren of Jimmy's antecedents.

Mr. Hazelwood listened very gravely to the recital, but pointed out to the Inspector at its close that unless it could be clearly proved that the boy had taken a false oath, Philip Hartley must ever remain, in the absence of any other probable perpetrator of the crime, the suspected person. He, however, would encourage to the utmost all inquiry which should tend to the apprehension and conviction of the real offender, and he strongly advised the Inspector to redouble his exertions in the cause of Justice.

Thus time stole on; Christmas had turned, and Jane Hartley, sitting by her lonely fireside in the long winter evenings, thought sadly of her poor Phil shut away in the county jail from all her loving care. But Jane was altered since the night of Granny's death, or rather, she had become her old self again, and was waiting now in humble faith and hope for the Lord's own time in which He should be gracious.

Once only since Phil's committal had she been able to go and see him, and then she had been accompanied to the jail by her faithful friend and Rector, Mr. Lyle. To the great disappointment of both, they did not find the poor lad supporting his imprisonment very patiently, nor did he appear to have profited much by the instruction and exhortations of the chaplain.

"He's always trying to get me to say I'm sorry," said the boy half angrily, "and I'm not; I can't be sorry for what I never did."

"But, my child," remarked the Rector softly, "there are a great many wrong things you *have* done for which you ought to be sorry. Now, I should like you to try and think that but for your own wrong doing, this evil might not have happened to you; I should better say, this trial, for I cannot think the Gracious God ever sends evil upon His children. Try and look at it in this light, my child. Suppose you were to see a boy robbing one particular orchard day after day, and you tried in every way you could to make him see how wicked his conduct was, but he would not listen to you. And then suppose you were told that another orchard close by had been also robbed, and that this same boy had been seen lurking near it, though no one actually saw him take the fruit; would you not very naturally think, nay, feel almost sure, that the boy who would not leave off his evil habit was indeed the thief? think Philip."

The colour rose to the lad's face as he answered, "Yes, Sir,"

"And yet," continued the Rector, "God knew that the boy had not taken the fruit, but because no warning would induce him to leave off his idle ways, He sent him a trial, the heaviest our Loving Lord can ever send; He allowed the boy to be punished for what he never did, that during the time he was

set apart from his fellow-creatures, and shut up in the cell of his prison, he might repent him truly of his many sins, and reflect that the bad name he had won for himself by his evil habits had been the sole cause of suspicion being directed against him."

"You mean me, Sir, don't you?" said Phil in a thick voice, striving hard not to let the tears fall which had gathered in his eyes.

"I do, my child. Your many idle and mischievous tricks have often made the people of your village justly angry with you, and, I fear, many of them believe that you alone fired Farmer Wilson's stacks. But, Philip, it is my earnest prayer, and your mother's too, that our good God will appear for you in His own time, and bring the real offender to justice, for I do not believe you to be guilty of this crime. Yet I would not have you think only of deliverance from the present trouble. Turn to your Saviour, my child, with all your heart; tell Him how sorry you are for the evil past; promise Him that in His strength you will strive to lead a better life in the time to come; and for the present, bear the burden patiently which the Lord has laid upon you; your reward will come soon, and it will be very sweet. And ever remember this, Philip: how much more terrible than this punishment would be the condition of your soul if you were really guilty of the crime laid to your charge; how bitterly your poor mother would grieve, and her head be bowed with shame; and how sad would be the reflections of me, your clergyman and friend, if I had to think that the little child I baptised into Christ's Holy Church had so early forsaken the paths of duty and peace, to do the work of Satan."

Philip was now fairly sobbing in his mother's arms, and for a time she tried in vain to comfort him; the stubborn pride, and sullenness of his nature had melted away before the gentle rebukes of

the Rector, and the soil of his heart was mercifully prepared to receive the good seed which in due time was to bring forth a golden harvest.

"Oh, Phil," cried poor Jane with great earnestness, "you must remember every word Mr. Lyle says to you, and pray always to our Blessed Lord to make you a better boy; and then, Phil, I shan't die of a broken heart, as poor Granny did."

"Oh, mother, was it *my* fault Granny died so sudden? the chaplain said it was."

"I'm afraid your being took to prison shook her very much," replied Jane sorrowfully, "and she was very old, she couldn't stand against the trouble; but I don't see how it was your fault, Phil; perhaps the gentleman spoke as if he thought you'd fired the stacks."

"Yes, I think he did," said the boy thoughtfully; "but he's very kind to me, and I can't help thinking he *is* right somehow about its being my fault that Granny died, because it's all along of my being a bad boy that people say I fired the stacks, isn't it, Sir?" and Phil looked sorrowfully at the Rector.

"I am afraid so, my child," replied Mr. Lyle; "indeed I am sure so; but you must not blame yourself too much about your poor Grandmother's death, she had lived to a great age, and although your arrest was undoubtedly a great shock to her, yet it is possible she might have sunk as rapidly had she not received it."

The boy looked comforted, and for a while was silent and reflective.

"Please, Sir," he said at last, the colour again rushing to his face, "I can't help feeling angry with that boy, that Jimmy as swore against me; the chaplain here says it's wrong, and I ought to forgive him."

"Perhaps your chaplain spoke under the impression that Jimmy had told the truth about you; if

so, he was undoubtedly right, because it would be most sinful on your part to be angry with a person for doing his duty; you might as well be angry with Inspector Mills for taking you in charge. But it is my firm conviction that Jimmy has *not* told the truth about you, and so has committed a very great sin, and until he repents sincerely of that sin, he cannot be forgiven either by God or man. Repentance is the condition of Forgiveness. But should Jimmy turn from the error of his ways, you must be *ready* to forgive him. What I mean is this: you cannot forgive him, in the full, strict meaning of the word forgive, until he repents, because God, our great Exemplar, does not forgive us until we confess, and turn away from, our sins. We are told to rebuke the evil-doer, and to shun his company, thereby declaring ourselves to be on God's side, and haters of all wickedness. But at the same time we must pray for him, and our hearts towards him must be filled with the long-suffering charity that is kind, we must bear no malice or hatred, or any evil feeling, and we must watch earnestly for the first signs of sorrow and repentance, so that even when our enemy is yet a great way off, we may see him, and have compassion, and run, and fall on his neck, and kiss him. Our Blessed Saviour taught us this in the parable of the Prodigal Son, which you have so often repeated to me. The father, maybe, had prayed many weary months for his son's repentance, and at the same time had watched, and waited for the first signs of it, as our Heavenly Father watches and waits for us to turn to Him; and *then* He will forgive us; then, and only then. Do you think you have understood me, Philip?"

"Yes, Sir, I think so; don't you mean that I ought to be angry about the wicked lie Jimmy's told, but I'm not to hate Jimmy?"

"Yes, Philip, I do; it is part of our religion to

feel and shew a just anger when we know and see a sin to be deliberately committed, and it is often necessary to make the sinner feel the effects of our displeasure; but in doing this we must, as I have said before, bear no malice, or gratify any private feeling, in short, we must rebuke lies and wickedness for the honour of God alone."

"And now," said Jane, as, seeing the Rector rise from the chair the turnkey had brought him, she took farewell of her poor boy, "I leave you with our Blessed Lord; pray to Him constant, Phil, and read your Bible constant, and God will bring you back to me sooner perhaps than we think. It isn't every one that thinks evil of you, Phil, my boy; Miss Hazelwood and Miss Em'ly don't, nor the Sawyers' either, nor old blind Kathy; and they're very kind to me, especially the ladies; they have sent you some nice books, and hope you will read them and profit by them; so God bless you, my poor dear boy, and keep you safe."

And then she turned away to hide her tears.

"I will try, Sir, I will try hard to remember all what you've been saying to me," said Phil with quivering lips, as the Rector kindly took his hand at parting, and wished him "God speed," "and I hope I shall come out of prison a better boy than ever I was before."

"I hope so, Philip; I hope so from my heart; and I believe you will, my poor lad; and so, good-bye for a little while."

Then they left the cell, and after a long conversation with the chaplain, whom Mr. Lyle deeply interested for the youthful prisonor, they turned from the gloomy precincts of the jail, and went back to Oakleigh.

CHAPTER X.

MASTER GILES "LOOKS IN."

It was Sunday afternoon in the late autumn, about a week after the Rector's visit to Phil in the prison. Softly and sweetly the bells of the village church of Oakleigh were calling worshippers from far and near to join in praising the Lord of the Harvest for the glorious abundance He had permitted the goodly earth to yield that year.

The small, square-towered edifice, with its one transept, stood on a slight elevation just within the park which surrounded Oakleigh Hall, and so about five minutes walk from the Squire's mansion. A low wooden paling protected the grass covered graves in the churchyard from the deer which were now scampering off to distant glades as the paths leading to the church became thronged with villagers.

Foremost amongst them was Fanny Lawson neatly dressed in a gray gown, whilst her bonnet was made bright, yet not smart, with rose-coloured ribbons. Her soft brown hair, drawn plainly off her face, was plaited away at the back of her head, and the expression of her countenance, and gentle, gray eyes was modest and good.

"Oh, Fanny," cried a voice behind her, "you do walk fast too, and I've been runnin' after you all down the Rectory Lane."

Here Ned Sawyer pulled up beside her, very much out of breath with his exertions.

"Why, Ned," said Fanny, "you must have run well, I never saw anything of you as I came along; but you've got something to tell me, Ned, I know, by your way; what is it?" and Fanny regarded her companion expectantly, who was looking uncomfortably clean and shining in his best Sunday clothes.

"Mast' Giles," gasped the youth, who had not yet recovered his breath; "Mast' Giles comin' along the road from Hillington, and turnin' down by the Rectory with a Prayer Book in his hand, and oh, Fanny, look! if he aint comin' in at the park gate, and the Prayer Book too."

Ned and Fanny both stood still for a few seconds watching the old man come up the path known as the Cherry Tree Walk.

"Oh, Ned," cried the girl at last, her eyes filling with tears, "I feel as if I can't believe it."

"I heerd Mr. Smyles at the Water Mill say as I was comin' along," remarked Ned in an excited manner, "that he'd never seen such a thing in his life; it was downright wonderful."

"Oh, Ned, suppose he comes to read his Bible, and say his prayers, and go to Heaven when he dies," cried Fanny, for her heart was full, and she felt obliged to speak out all that was in it.

"My!" said Ned, looking quite serious.

"Ned," continued the girl, "ever since the night poor Phil Hartley's granny died, I've prayed Mast' Giles might come to church, and leave off doubting everything; and doesn't it seem as if God had heard me?"

"Lor!" ejaculated Ned solemnly, his wide open eyes still fixed on the approaching form of Master Giles.

"Oh, dear me," cried Fanny, "I do long to speak to him, but I can't now, I must wait till after Service, or I shall be late for the singing; good-bye, Ned; how's your mother, and little Ben?"

"Oh, mother's middlin', thank'e, and Ben, he aint much; but you'd best be off, Fanny, the bells is nigh done ringin'."

So Fanny hastened her steps towards the church, whilst Ned strolled leisurely back down the path.

"I say, Mast' Giles," he said, as the waggoner

approached him with an encouraging smile, "will you come and sit along of me in church?"

"Who told you as I was goin' to church?" asked Master Giles quietly, the smile disappearing, but a twinkle remaining in his eye.

"Why, no one in particular, everyone's sayin' so."

"Oh, everyone's sayin' so, is they?" remarked the waggoner, "well, then, I'd best turn back, and disappoint 'em all."

"Oh, no, Mast' Giles, don't do that," said the good-hearted youth, feeling somehow it would be his fault if the old man did not accomplish the object of his journey, "just come and sit along of me."

"Well, I don't know as I won't, now I've come so fur," returned Master Giles.

"I say," said Ned, as they walked along together, "aint you got a nice book there, handsome, aint it?"

"Well," said the waggoner, holding up the Prayer Book he was carrying, opening it, passing the leaves rapidly under his thumb, and otherwise exhibiting it for his companion's admiration, "it's about the best as I could get in Hillington; I thought I might as well get a good one when I was at it, because it aint likely I shall ever want another, and the print's nice, and large, I can a'most see to read it without my spectacles."

"Have ye read much of it yet, Mast' Giles?" asked Ned curiously.

"Well, no, not very much; but I see it all seems set in proper order, and aint at all confusin' as I've heerd say it was; but here we are at the church; now you go in first, and lead the way, and I'll just come after."

So Ned, looking as serious as it was possible for his round, chubby face ever to look, led his companion into church by the south-west door, and then to a seat just below the font, and facing the east window. A slight murmur was noticeable among

the congregation, and here and there could be heard a faint whisper; it was observed also that even the Squire looked furtively once or twice from his seat next the reading-desk at the new-comer.

But Master Giles himself appeared quite oblivious of the universal attention his presence was attracting. His eyes were fixed on the beautiful window before him, wonderfully and rarely beautiful for so small and obscure a church. It was of great antiquity, and had been brought from a convent in Belgium by a cousin of the Squire. It consisted of three lights, and the subject was the Crucifixion, with the Blessed Virgin Mary, and St. John the Evangelist on either side. Master Giles was so lost in the contemplation of its beauties, that Ned had to nudge his arm twice or thrice before he could draw his attention to himself.

"It's the Harvest Thanksgiving," whispered Ned when he had got the old man's ear, "and we always sing a hymn first; here's a book, it's mother's, and the print's uncommon large;" he pointed to hymn No. 223, as he put the book in the waggoner's hands.

"Thank'e," replied Giles in an undertone, with a half nod, placing it open on the ledge before him, and diving into the breast-pocket of his coat for his spectacles, "thank'e kindly," and then, when his efforts had been rewarded with success, and the spectacles were fairly adjusted on his nose, his eyebrows elevated to keep them in position, and his lips slightly apart, he proceeded to spell over the words of the hymn to himself with much satisfaction.

But, by and by, when the village choir of "young men and maidens" burst forth in the glad and thankful strains so well known, the satisfaction of the waggoner considerably increased, and the colour deepened under his weather-bronzed face.

"That's very nice, very nice indeed that is," he remarked half audibly at the conclusion of the hymn,

and when the noise caused by the coughing, and rustling of the congregation getting seated and composed was at its height.

Ned, who had heard this remark, regarded his companion with much complacency, and felt not a little proud that he had come to church under his auspices.

The Service now commenced, and the Prayer Book which seemed to have gained as much notoriety as its owner, was brought into use, and good use, for if Master Giles were not a worshipper, he was at least a faithful follower of the beautiful Prayers the Rector offered up in his earnest voice ; he certainly exhibited no signs of flagging attention, and the deep sigh he heaved when all was over, another hymn sung, and Mr. Lyle had ascended the pulpit to deliver his sermon, was not by any means one of weariness, but rather of expectation that he was going to hear something very good. And in this the old waggoner was not disappointed, for the Rector spoke on a subject with which he was fully acquainted : "Seed-time and Harvest."

In well chosen language, yet easily to be understood by the uneducated portion of the congregation, the great object for which they were assembled that day was explained, and laid before them. In all the fair land, from the distant Northern Isles, to the warmer Southern coast, such an abundant ingathering of the labours of the field had not been known for years. "The Lord had been exceeding gracious to His inheritance, and refreshed it when it was weary," for, the Rector reminded his hearers, the days were not so very long gone by when the cry of distress and hunger from our manufacturing districts had risen as a great wail throughout the kingdom, and though it had been heard by the wealthy of the land, and had been responded to with a generosity not to be surpassed by any nation, yet the harvests of those

gone by years had not been so plentiful as to cause the poor "to eat and be filled." But now, in the coming winter, there was enough, and more than enough; the sower had gone forth in the early spring, and it would seem that the seed he sowed had fallen neither by the way-side, nor in stony places, nor among thorns, but all into good ground, and had brought forth fruit, some a hundred-fold, some sixty-fold, some thirty-fold.

And now to regard the subject in its spiritual aspect. Who could say that the great In-gathering of souls, when the Lord of the Harvest shall come to claim His own, would in any way resemble the abundance for which they were praising God that day! Had we not much cause to fear that it would have a greater likeness to the field in which the householder sowed goodly seed indeed, but in which, "while men slept," the enemy came, and sowed tares also! This was the root of the evil around us, "while men sleep," while they are careless of their souls, and ignorant of the God Who sent His Son to die for them, while their hearts are cold, and their ears deaf to the Voice of Love. And should they not awaken until the "fields are white to harvest," until the reaper puts in His sickle, what must be the result? They must be bound in bundles for burning, and cast into the furnace of fire. Good seed, by the grace of God, can be sown in the human heart at any period of life, but how much more likely would it yield an abundant harvest if sown in the fresh, tender soil of childhood and youth! It were best, however, in any case, to lose no further time in receiving this good seed, for the Great In-gathering might be nearer than anyone thought; the Books might even now be opening, out of Which the dead, both small and great, will be judged, and sentenced either to everlasting joy, or everlasting sorrow, for our souls must be either as precious wheat gathered

into the Heavenly Garner, or as chaff and tares, to be cast into the Lake of Fire.

But for us, my beloved people, said the Rector in conclusion, looking earnestly round on his little congregation, for us, let the Great Day of Final Judgment be a Glorious Harvest Home; let us now, while on earth, receive with gratitude the good seed which the Lord Jesus Christ is ever ready to sow in our hearts; let us, after we have so received it, pray that the Holy Spirit of the Father and the Son may come and dwell within us, and so help us to cultivate the seed that it may indeed "ripen with a wondrous power," and then, O blessed thought, on the golden floor of the King's Own City, we shall be "gathered in," "gathered in," with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, David, and Hezekiah, with all the faithful departed, "gathered in," to join for ever with countless legions of Angels in the song of Praise which never ceases before the Great White Throne, ever and for ever "joying," before the Lord of Mercy, "according to the joy of Harvest."

In the solemn hush that followed the conclusion of the sermon, and benediction, nothing of course could be remarked of the effect it had had on Master Giles; but when the last hymn was being sung, a huge red pocket-handkerchief made its appearance, and a diligent cleaning of his spectacles prevented his seeing the book Ned was holding towards him.

"He didn't think he'd been crying," Ned remarked afterwards to Fanny, "but he fancied his spectacles looked rather dimmish."

But now the Service was fairly over, and the congregation dispersed, many were the remarks made on so singular a circumstance as the half-owner of Winfell Mill coming to church.

"Nigh on fifty year I've known Mast' Giles," observed one old countryman to another, as they feebly walked home together side by side, "and I

never seed or heerd of his goin' into the House of God afore."

"Aye, aye," returned his companion, "it's a long lane that's got no turnin', maybe Mast' Giles has only just come to it."

"I hardly know when I have been more surprised," remarked the Squire to Mr. Lyle as they strolled towards the Rectory together, "than I was this afternoon to see old Giles in church; he is the most confirmed Radical in all the country round.

A faint flush, and a smile of pleasure rose to the Rector's face.

"He is a good fellow, a very good fellow indeed," he murmured softly; "you would be surprised," he added in a louder voice, "at the thorough sense of right and wrong he has; and his sound judgment and discrimination would be rare, even in an educated person."

"Oh," said the Squire, laughing; "I have had several opportunities of hearing him deliver his opinions; I must say this in his favour however, if it were not for his scepticism, I should be glad if others of his class were more like him."

"Perhaps," remarked the Rector quietly, "he has not been so thorough a sceptic as some have supposed. He has a keen appreciation of what is good, and worthy to be admired in his fellow-creatures. Surely we may think that as he can perceive the reflection of Perfect Goodness, he may not be altogether sceptical as to the Perfect Goodness itself."

"It may be so," returned the Squire; "it were charity at least to think so."

Meanwhile the subject of the foregoing remarks was being congratulated warmly by his young friend, Fanny Lawson, who had overtaken him in the Cherry Tree Walk.

"Oh, Mast' Giles," she began; "I never was so pleased in my life."

"Warn't ye, my girl; well I don't know as ever I was nayther."

"You like church then?" cried Fanny.

"Look ye here now," said Master Giles, alternately gesticulating with his right and left hand at Ned and Fanny who were walking on either side of him; "look ye here; I was thorough convinced afore I come to church this afternoon, as the man I was goin' to hear preach, and say prayers, and that sort, was a downright *good* man; I don't say anythin' about his bein' eddicated, and a fine gentleman, that he can't help, but it must take a deal of workin' of that Holy Spirit he talked on, to make anythin' so good as him out of human natur; for human natur," continued Master Giles in his most emphatic manner; "is like them apples as falls from the trees, they looks sweet and sound enough layin' about in the grass, at least many on 'em does, but when we picks 'em up and trys 'em, they're rotten at the core; so is human natur, rotten at the core, always hungry and thirsty to do what's bad; surely I've seen a little good in it sometimes; look at Mis' Hartley now, and the poor old woman as is dead; but I've often wondered where it come from, I knowed it warn't nat'ral to human natur; *now*, I knows where it comes from, this here book tells me; (and he laid his left hand solemnly on the Prayer Book he held in his right;) and the Bible as I've took to readin' on lately, tells me, and your Rector tells me; and yet after all, Fanny, I feel it's that Holy Spirit, and nothin' else, as has downright convinced me."

"Oh! Mast' Giles, I'm so glad," said Fanny with tears in her eyes, not exactly knowing why she was crying.

"Thank ye, my girl, thank ye; but you've got no call to cry as I can see; this has been a very nice day indeed, and we ought to be thankful for it."

"Why so I am," said Fanny; "but I'm so silly, I always cry when I'm glad."

"Well," remarked Master Giles; "in course we all knows as women in general *is* very silly; but I'm glad to find one as don't mind ownin' to it."

Fanny laughed. "Oh, Mast' Giles," she said, "you talk so droll; but, Ned," she added, appealing to her companion, "aren't you pleased too?"

"Yes," said Ned, grinning with much contentment. Ned was always pleased when other people seemed happy.

"Well, now," said Master Giles, as he shook hands with his two young friends at parting, he having to go on to Hillington, and they to their respective homes; "I'm very much obliged to ye both for your company, and good wishes; I hope the good seed's a takin' root in all three of us, it'll be very nice to be altogether in that 'ere Harvest-Home your Rector talked on; there, good-bye, good-bye," he added hastily, as Fanny again shewed signs of tears. "Why, bless me," he said to himself, as he hurried away and walked up the road to Hillington, "if these women aint more softer nor ever I thought 'em," and once again the red handkerchief was brought from the capacious pocket, but this time it was not Master Giles' spectacles which looked "rather dimmish."

CHAPTER XI.

THE MISSIONER.

A cold, January thaw; mud-stained snow trodden all over the greasy pavement, and lying in slowly dissolving heaps near the kerb; omnibuses rolling heavily along the highway, and foot-passengers jost-

ling each other with little ceremony; a fine, penetrating rain falling drearily over all, adding to the general mist, and muddiness of the streets.

It was about one o'clock in the day, and business in the city was at its height; crowds of eager men struggling for gain were massed together on the Exchange, where Fortune with her flying wheel was distributing her uncertain favours, and Mammon sat enthroned in his own place.

A Blackwall omnibus came slowly up from Cheapside towards Cornhill, its open door swinging backwards and forwards, apparently to the great discomfort of the passengers, one of whom, a gentleman, and, from his general appearance, evidently a clergyman, was vainly attempting to gain the attention of the conductor, who, on his part, was endeavouring to attract any stray fare by reiterated cries of "East India Road, High Street Poplar, and Lime'us Church."

"Put me down in the Whitechapel Road, near the London Hospital," said the gentleman in a clear voice to the conductor, who by this time having despaired of making any impression on the general public, was slamming the door, and gradually being induced by energetic raps from the umbrella of an elderly lady sitting in the corner nearest him, to fix his wandering attention on his interlocutor.

"London Orsepital; all right," he replied laconically, with a nod, then swinging himself back on his stand, the omnibus jolted and lumbered along at a little quicker rate.

The clergyman expressed his thanks to his energetic fellow-passenger, and then relapsed into the silence he had observed since he first took his seat at Charing Cross.

He was a man of, perhaps, little more than middle age, of a fine and commanding presence. His close-cut black hair was parted equally over a broad,

but not very high forehead, and his finely-moulded features were almost Grecian in their outline, whilst his beard was also close-cut, and of the same black hue as his hair. The long, dark eyes seemed capable of much, and varied expression, but the general aspect of his countenance when in repose was one of perfect self-control, such as had been acquired under severe discipline, and which had evidently formed no part of his natural disposition; this was even to be discerned in the action of his well-formed hands, which seemed rather to grasp than hold the umbrella on which he rested his chin, as his apparently listless gaze was turned on the murky streets.

A shrill whistle, and the omnibus suddenly drew up.

"London 'Orsepital," said the conductor, lurching his head towards the interior of the conveyance, and then as quickly withdrawing it, and opening the door. The gentleman alighted, and paid his fare; another whistle, and the omnibus again rolled on.

"One of them Mission clergy," observed the conductor, leisurely regarding his penned-up fares, of which there were about five, and evidently speaking for their general information, "he gives it 'em right and left too I hear."

A few muffled ejaculations in reply which gave no encouragement for any discursiveness, and then the man yawned, stared blankly before him a few moments, and finally swung himself back on his stand.

Meanwhile, the Missioner, for such he was, having reached the pavement, found his further progress retarded for the present by a crowd of people, chiefly of the lower order, which had gathered round the Hospital. Three or four constables were carrying in on a stretcher the shattered form of a man, whilst as many more were endeavouring to keep order in the crowd. He was just about to ask the cause of the accident, when a poor, wretched-looking woman stumbled against the kerb, and would have fallen

violently forward, had he not caught her arm and held her firmly until she steadied herself.

"Are you hurt?" asked the Missioner kindly.

The woman only stared; it was a pain-stricken face, full of a speechless woe; she did not thank him, nor make any reply.

"Good-bye, father," shouted a lank, destitute boy in the crowd, as the stretcher disappeared within the Hospital; then some jeers and laughter followed, in which the boy himself had no small share.

"Here, you, Jimmy," said a constable turning quickly round on him, "I shall want you for this business; don't try and get out of the way; I shall keep a sharp look out on you."

The boy became suddenly quiet, and began to move off.

"Where's your mother?" asked the policeman sharply.

"Don't know," was the sulky reply.

"I saw her up in Grim Street, looking on at the fight," observed the officer.

"I aint always hangin' after my mother," said the boy with a scowl, and then he elbowed his way out of the crowd, and strolled off amidst the renewed laughter of the bystanders.

The Missioner was still standing by the side of the woman he had saved from falling. He had discovered by this time that there had been a fight up in one of the streets leading from the main thoroughfare, that the wretched creature he had just seen taken to the Hospital had received such terrible injuries in the brutal conflict, that there was no chance of his recovery, if indeed he were not dead already; the man with whom he had been fighting was now locked up in the police station; they had both been drinking since early morning.

Turning from this recital with a sickening sense of the vastness of human misery, and the hideous

depths of human depravity, he again encountered the face of the woman who had vouchsafed him no reply. A constable was speaking to her, and she was shrinking from him in evident terror, though neither his manner nor words were rough.

"I don't know, I don't know nothin', don't ask me," she was saying piteously.

"Well, you see, I'm obliged," said the officer; "but there, I'll look in on you to-night, or to-morrow morning."

"Will he die?" asked the woman with an expression on her face that was neither anguish nor joy, but partook in a measure of both.

"Very likely, I think," replied the policeman.

The woman for a moment seemed to hold her breath, then her lips trembled, and she appeared about to speak, but the crowd at this juncture began to disperse in all directions, and by the time the space in front of the Hospital was clear, the Missioner, policeman, and woman had each gone their several ways.

And Jimmy too had gone his, with his hands stowed away in his pockets, and his ragged trousers hanging in tatters round his bare ankles and mud-splashed feet. There was a gaunt look in the boy's face, and indeed his general aspect spoke of utter destitution. Strolling on through the dismal streets, his attention was now and then attracted by the performances of some of the squalid members of his own class, who, in hopes of picking up some halfpence that might by chance be thrown them by the outside passengers of omnibuses, and other public conveyances, were busily engaged in turning summersaults with great dexterity. Jimmy could not have told why, but somehow he felt no inclination to join in this sometimes profitable diversion, at which he was an expert; he had a dim sense, as he looked on for a few moments, of the general benefits

that might accrue to him by a participation in the sport, and he had a certain knowledge that only a piece of dry bread had passed his lips that day; yet, he felt no inducement for any active display of his capabilities, so, with his hands still stowed in his pockets, he strolled on.

Since leaving the crowd at the Hospital, an impression had been gradually stealing upon him that he had seen his father for the last time; the fact in itself did not call for any demonstration of either joy or sorrow on his part, it was rather a matter of pure indifference, but he felt it impossible to avoid speculating on the probable whereabouts of his parent after death. Of course he would be put into the ground somewhere, but in Jimmy's benighted mind there was a stray recollection of something beyond Death, something shrouded in impenetrable gloom, and which, after all, was but a dim remembrance of very early childhood, which had now and again flitted across his memory as he had passed the open doors of churches.

And yet this dim remembrance which seemed trying to shape itself into something definite, was now associated in the boy's vagrant thoughts with a place of torment of which, alas, he had too often heard, and the unmistakeable name of which was, Hell. Would his father go there? he speculated, and after all, was it worse than living here in this cold, muddy, starving world; could anything be worse than the fearful scenes of crime and misery with which he, young as he was, had become familiarised, and of which even his natural enemies, the policemen, had no conception? Could the Devil, the awful Power in that dreary Hell, be more demoniac than the fierce and fiendish men and women amongst whom he had lived from infancy? With these thoughts shaping themselves in his mind, Jimmy became aware that the fine, drizzling rain had increased to

a steady, and copious downfall, and looked about him for a temporary shelter; a low archway soon caught his eye, and he hastened his steps, and took refuge beneath it.

Just as he did so, two gentlemen passed him, coming up from some offices to which the archway was the entrance; they were neither of them young, and their bearing was such as would impress even a casual beholder that they occupied a substantial position in life. They appeared in animated converse.

"It was a great, black Lie," the elder of the two was saying to his companion with much energy and emphasis, as they passed Jimmy, "and the Judge told him in Court that no sentence *he* could pass upon him would be so terrible as the awful punishment God has prepared for all Liars."

The gentlemen turned out into the roadway and disappeared; but the words Jimmy had overheard seemed left behind, seemed finding many voices in the low, dark archway, seemed to rise and fall on his ear with startling distinctness; "The awful punishment God has prepared for all Liars;" Jimmy shuddered; Who was this God? he had heard of Him before, or rather he had simply heard His Name, mixed with the foul and withering language to which he was too well accustomed, not only to hear, but to use himself in his daily intercourse with his miserable, and infamous associates.

But it now began to dawn on his keen intelligence that this God Whom he had hitherto regarded as some Evil Power, akin to, and equal with the Devil, was in reality a Being altogether opposed to the dread iniquity he saw daily practised around him, and was capable of preparing punishment for the evil-doer; nay, more, He could also inflict it. Wickedness is not antagonistic to wickedness; this God then, fierce and terrible as He undoubtedly was, was the Possessor of Power vastly superior to that

of the Devil, and was therefore more to be feared. Was it possible to escape Him? Jimmy wondered. Was there no place in all the world where he could go and hide himself? some place where policemen, and magistrates, and Judges had never even been heard of, for these, the boy reasoned mentally, were the only probable people *he* knew of who could inform against him to God? Surely there were places over the sea where this Mighty Being had never been, and of which He knew nothing? Jimmy had heard of ships touching at islands where only trees, and plants, and small animals had been found, and where the foot of man had never trod. Why should he not try and reach one of these islands, and always live away from everybody, so that there could be no one to tell God how he had thieved, and cheated, and lied; how he had helped his father fire the wheat stacks on the Deepdale Farm, and then had sworn to the black and fearful Lie which had sent innocent Philip Hartley to a lingering imprisonment? Oh, where should he go from this God? How should he escape the awful punishment prepared for all Liars?

Jimmy looked out from the archway up and down the darkening street, the rain had become a mere drizzle again, and the lamps were being lighted; he waited a few moments as if uncertain which way he should go, but there was a decided preference in his mind towards the direction of the docks; whilst he lingered, the bells of a neighbouring church began to chime.

"What's them bells ringin' for?" said Jimmy to himself, half aloud; then he seemed to recollect something, for he added, "oh, it's the Mission."

After a little further reflection, his mind appeared to be quite made up, and he started off rather briskly in the direction of the docks, with an undefined sense that by so doing he was increasing the distance between him and that Awful Being he had so much

reason to fear; but he had not proceeded above half a mile when another thought appeared to strike him, and he suddenly halted.

"I'd best just make sure of father first," he said to himself, and so turned back, but he walked slower, and the sense of relief he before experienced, now changed to a sense of fear.

When he reached the Hospital there was no one about of whom he could inquire as to his father's condition, and nearly an hour passed before the porter made his appearance.

"Now what are you standing about here for," said the man, coming out on to the pavement, as he perceived the boy had some object in view by his manner.

"I aint standin' about for no harm," replied Jimmy, "I've come to know about that man as was took in this afternoon."

"Was it an accident?" asked the man.

"He'd been fightin'," answered the boy.

"Oh, the man that had been drinking; oh, he's dead."

Jimmy had rather expected to hear this announcement, but he did not expect that he should feel so suddenly cold when it was actually made.

"Did you know him?" asked the porter.

"He's my father," replied Jimmy.

"Oh," said the man, his indifference lapsing into something like seriousness; "well, he went off very sudden soon after he came."

The boy stared vacantly down the road for about the space of a minute, then, as it seemed to him there was nothing more to say or to learn, he walked slowly away in the direction of Aldgate.

But the lightness of step with which he had traversed the half-mile down the Commercial Road had now entirely forsaken him. Death had overtaken his wretched father with such awful sudden-

ness, that an alarm sprang up in the boy's mind with respect to himself; and the prospect of ever reaching the island over the sea, where he might escape the God he dreaded, became extremely remote.

Sauntering on with this newly-awakened fear ever increasing, the well-lighted church of Aldgate attracted his attention.

"Oh, it's the Mission," said Jimmy to himself again, and he walked stealthily up the churchyard, and peeped in at one of the doors. A hymn was being sung, but the boy could not hear the words; how curious the congregation looked, he thought, not fine, and dressed up like church-going people on a Sunday, but all in their work-a-day clothes, and many of them as squalid and destitute as himself.

But Jimmy became so much more interested in the Mission Priest than in the congregation, that he soon altogether ceased to regard the latter, and concentrated his attention solely on that central figure. For when the hymn was concluded, the Missioner raised his hands, and looked all round the church; there was a fever-flush on his cheek, and the long, dark eyes were brilliant with the intensity of thought and feeling the address he had been giving had called into them. He was standing on the chancel steps, and every word he uttered, every perfect intonation of the clear, penetrating voice was heard in the remotest corner of the edifice. He pronounced the benediction; low and calm were the tones at first, like unto the Peace they were expressing, then they rose as though freighted with the immensity and completeness of the blessing of a Triune God, and then once more they fell, and sin-sick souls, and aching hearts sobbed out a low "Amen."

The wretched Jimmy standing by the door, which he had managed to push a little way open, felt the full force of the impressive tones of the stranger's voice, as they seemed to sweep past him out into

the damp churchyard, and hover over the graves of the long buried dead. But the words, alas, were sadly meaning ess to him, he had no comprehension of their height, and depth, and breadth ; One Name, truly, had made him start with a vague terror, One Awful Name, but as no one present seemed in visible confusion when It was pronounced, Jimmy began to feel a sort of reassurance taking the place of his fear, and thought it possible he might not have heard aright.

The mixed congregation now slowly dispersed, and the Missioner, divesting himself of his stole and surplice, which he placed on a bench near which he had been standing when addressing the assemblage, came down the aisle in his cassock. and passed out with the people into the street. To many of them, as he went along, he addressed a few words of earnest exhortation, or encouragement, but gradually the stream thinned, and parted in divers directions, and he pursued his way alone. And yet not alone, for the lank, ragged form of Jimmy followed closely in his rear, unnoticed and unheard, for the boy's shoeless feet made no sound on the humid pavement. Presently the Missioner turned into a gloomy and silent side street, where leaning against a lamp-post, and folding his arms, he appeared to regard the many pedestrians in the Whitechapel Road with an anxious scrutiny.

Up and down in a ceaseless, endless stream went those hundreds of human feet, unerringly though imperceptibly ever nearing that mysterious goal, to which mortals have given the name of Death ;—and the tramp of those many footsteps found echo in the heart of the priest as the marching of a vast army towards the shoreless sea of eternity. its broken ranks made up of blind and halt, and wounded, and its leaders—angels truly—but on whose dark brows the awful word "Lost" had been everlastingly branded,

when, in the long gone by ages there was War in Heaven. Yet for this vast army of human souls the Crucified was pleading at the Throne of Grace;—for these poor sin-fettered hearts those Holy Hands, and Feet, and Side, had been pierced and riven;—for these earth-stained, demon-led, fallen children of Eve, the Fountain of Christ's Precious Blood had been opened, in Which they might wash and be cleansed. For surely *some* of them had heard the bitter, yet glorious Story of the Cross? *Some* had been moved by the recital of the Mocking, and the Scourging, the Hunger, and the Thirst endured for *them*. "Or is it *nothing* to you, all ye that pass by?" burst from the lips of the Mission Priest at length, with a quivering pathos which shewed how deep and intense was the feeling which prompted the words.

"What aint nothing?" asked a voice from the shadows behind him. The Missioner started and looked round.

"Who spoke?" he demanded quickly.

Jimmy crept out from a doorway in which he had been standing, and came forward into the dim lamplight. For a few moments the clergyman and boy regarded each other without speaking, though the minds of both were active; the Missioner yearning over Jimmy as a "brand to be plucked from the burning," and Jimmy's keen wits suggesting the probability of his gaining reliable information respecting the Being of Whom he stood in such dread.

"You asked me a question, boy," said the Missioner at length, "I was speaking my thoughts aloud; you heard the words?"

"Yes," replied Jimmy, "you was speakin' to them down there," and he pointed with his finger, as he spoke, to the Whitechapel Road.

"They were not my own words," observed the Missioner slowly.

The boy looked puzzled.

"They were the words of the Son of God," continued the stranger in the same slow manner, with his eyes fixed on the attentive face of the boy. Jimmy shuddered and drew back; the Missioner observed the action, and asked:

"Have you heard of God before?"

"Yes—no—yes," replied Jimmy, with evident trepidation.

"Do you wish to hear more?" asked the stranger.

Jimmy took a long breath, and a hasty survey of the immediate vicinity of the lamp-post, then coming a step nearer the Missioner, he said hurriedly, and in a low voice:

"You're a gentleman, aint yer; you won't tell Him, will yer?"

"Who?" asked the clergyman, who was beginning to fear the starvation so legibly written in Jimmy's face had weakened his intellect.

"God," replied the boy in a still lower voice, and falling back a pace or two.

"What is it you do not wish me to tell him?" inquired the Missioner in an encouraging manner, already becoming much interested.

"Now, look here," said Jimmy, again coming forward, and speaking rapidly, "I'm a bad boy; I'm one of the reg'lar bad ones; I tell lies, and steal, and that sort, and I want to get out of the way of God; I don't care how fur off the place is where He aint, I'd try and get there somehow; now, you're a gentleman, and know everythink, I daresay, and you'll tell me, won't yer?"

Sad, yet full of much compassion was the countenance of the stranger as he replied:

"I cannot tell you of any place far or near where God is not, for He is everywhere; He fills heaven, and earth, and even hell; no one can escape God; no one can do anything, whether it be good or evil, that He does not see; no one can utter a word which

He does not hear; He is listening to you and me now; He is even present with us in this quiet street."

More appalling words than these could not have fallen on the wretched Jimmy's ear, he trembled visibly, and his wan, sunken face became yet more haggard and ghastly.

"What will He do to me?" he almost whispered, "He's got somethin' awful ready for liars, aint He?"

"All liars," replied the Missioner in a solemn voice, "will be cast into the lake which burns with fire and brimstone; the lake is called Hell, and the fire of it is never quenched; the awful punishment will last for ever and ever."

Jimmy's forehead was damp from the intense horror with which his quaking heart was filled; he looked drearily up into the Missioner's face, and the hopelessness of that mute appeal struck the deepest chords in the stranger's soul.

"Would you like to be saved from the awful punishment?" he asked gently.

"Yes, yes," cried Jimmy with impetuous eagerness, catching hold of the lamp-post with one hand, whilst with the other he pushed away the lank, black hair that had straggled over his forehead, "yes, yes, save me."

The Missioner shook his head sorrowfully.

"*I* have no power to save you," he said, "but I will tell God —"

"No, don't," interrupted Jimmy in desperation, "don't, you're a gentleman, aint yer? now, you won't tell Him, will yer?"

"I cannot tell Him more about you," resumed the Missioner seriously, "than He already knows, but I *can* ask Him to make you sorry for your wickedness; I *can* ask Him to keep you from doing wrong all the rest of your life; and, listen, boy, when you truly leave off stealing and lying, and evil of every kind, and when you are really sorry for the bad life you have hitherto led, God will forgive you for His Son the

Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and you will escape the awful punishment you have so much reason now to fear."

Jimmy took a long breath and stared at the Missioner.

"You don't know what bad things I've done," he said, shaking his head slowly; "them sort of bad things as it aint no use to be sorry for."

The clergyman took out his watch and looked at it.

"I must go back to the church now," he said sadly, "but, boy, I should like to see you again; I have much to tell you of the Good and Gracious God Who is only waiting to forgive you, and to take away all your fear. Will you meet me here to-morrow night at eight o'clock, and go to the church with me? there is a Service for boys only, and when it is over, you may tell me, if you like, of all the wrong things you have done, and for which, you say, it is of no use to be sorry; will you come?"

"Yes," replied Jimmy readily, who, in truth, was glad to catch at any means which might offer the prospect of relief from his great dread.

"You will certainly come?" asked the Missioner earnestly.

"Sure," was the prompt reply.

Then they walked side by side silently up the street until they reached the main thoroughfare.

"I'm goin' home now," said Jimmy, inclining his head in the direction of Whitechapel, as his companion turned towards Aldgate.

"Have you a father and mother?" asked the Missioner, lingering yet a few moments.

"Yes," replied the boy; "well, no, I aint exactly got a father, because he died this afternoon at the 'Orsepital; but he was all right this mornin' till he got drinkin' and fightin', and then he got killed."

The clergyman looked pained, familiar as he had become with human depravity since he had gone forth as a labourer into the Lord's Harvest, every

fresh evidence of it cut as keenly home to his sensitive nature as in the first encounter.

"Boy," he said kindly, thinking it wiser to make no remark upon Jimmy's last speech as time would not allow of his going into the matter seriously, "you look as though you were hungry, have you had any food to-day?"

"Only a bit of bread," answered Jimmy drearily.

"Take this and get something for supper," said the Missioner, dropping a shilling into the boy's hand as he spoke.

Jimmy was utterly confounded, he looked down at the bright coin in his dirty hand, and then up into his companion's face.

"You will not spend it for anything else but food, will you?" asked the Missioner persuasively.

"No," replied the boy in a hoarse voice, still lost in wonder at the generosity of the stranger.

"I believe you," said the clergyman, "and I shall expect to meet you here to-morrow night at this time, so good-bye until then." He turned away as he spoke, and walked towards Aldgate; Jimmy stood and watched him until he was out of sight.

"I'm a liar," thought the boy, "and he says he believes me; I told him I were a liar, and a reg'lar bad boy, and he give me a shillin', and spoke kind and soft like; I wish somehow I didn't tell lies, I wish I could leave everythink bad right off, like he told me, but it aint much use wishin';" and Jimmy strolled on with rather confused ideas as to how it was possible for him ever to be any different to what he was now, little guessing that the very desire to cease from evil, which he was entertaining for the first time, was the golden key to that better future near the gates of which his benighted soul was hovering, and through which was shining, though as yet unseen by him, the Light of that endless Life which is the heritage of the Redeemed.

CHAPTER XII.

JIMMY'S RESOLVE.

It was past seven o'clock when Jimmy groped his way up the dark and dilapidated stair-case of No. 18, of the Alley which, as if in mockery of the destitution of its inhabitants, had been called "Goldacre."

Opening the door of the back room on the top-floor he perceived his mother sitting by the fireless grate, wrapped in her thin, old shawl, her bonnet tied firmly on her head, and a small bundle rolled in a blue cotton handkerchief on the floor by her side. Her hands were folded, and resting on her lap, she turned her heavy eyes towards the door as Jimmy entered, but took no other notice of his appearance.

"Where are you off to?" asked the boy, coming forward into the faint glow of the rushlight.

"Never mind," replied the woman quietly.

"Oh, but you're off somewhere, *I* know, by that bundle," he continued, giving the article in question a slight kick as he spoke.

"Well, it doesn't much matter, Jimmy, where I'm going," replied his mother.

"Oh, I don't know about that," said the boy, looking sharply round the room, "why, where's the furnitur', the table and chairs and that sort?"

"The man's been and took them for rent," said the woman without looking up, "he'd been to the 'Orsepital and heard the news before me, and then he come back and took them."

"You know father's dead then?" inquired the boy.

"Yes, I know," replied his mother quietly.

"Look here," said Jimmy presently, sitting down on the floor, and unfolding a newspaper parcel he had been holding in his hand, "here's some cooked meat, and a loaf of bread; a gentleman give me a

shillin' and told me to get some food, so I got this, and there's some ha'pence out; but I'm not hungry somehow, won't you have some?"

"Gentleman give you a shillin'," repeated the woman in a mocking tone, "what did he give it yer for? you did'nt help yourself to it, did you; that isn't your way of gettin' shillins, is it?"

"Well, it is in general," answered Jimmy coolly, "but there's the gentleman down at Aldgate Church, you can go and ask him."

"I'd best go and tell him what you are as he's give his shillin' to," said the woman with energy, "he couldn't have found a worse boy in all London than you; oh, Jimmy, I never walk about with the creases, and sees the walls of that jail in Horsemonger Lane but I wishes you was inside them, and that poor innocent out; I feel fiercer and harder every day when I think of that wicked thing you and your father done."

Jimmy looked cowed by this spirited attack; the meek woman to whom he had been accustomed so long, seemed suddenly to have changed her character.

"I say," he said at last, "s'pose I was goin' to be sorry for all what I've done wrong."

"Sorry," interrupted his mother with bitter scorn, "what's the use of your bein' *sorry;* will it bring that poor lad out of jail, or undo all the trouble that's gone by? don't talk to me of bein' *sorry*."

"Well," ventured Jimmy, whose manner had become much milder since his mother had begun to develop an individuality she had too long lost, "the gentleman that's been talkin' to me to-night said I ought to be sorry; I should think he knows better than you about things, and I'm goin' to meet him to-morrow night, and goin' to church along of some other boys."

"Don't be a hypocrite, Jimmy," cried his mother in an unnaturally sharp tone, "that's hateful; be

bad, if you must be bad, but don't be bad, and go about pretendin' to be good, there's nothin' wickeder; *you* go to church indeed; *you* be sorry for what you've done wrong; *you*."

"Well," replied the boy quietly, "I'm goin' anyhow; what'll come of it afterwards aint easy to say, but perhaps you know."

"I know you'll never be nothink but what you are now," retorted the woman, "a bad, wicked boy; oh, I wish often and often you'd died with them others, instead of livin' to go down to Hillington to tell that lie."

"Can't you think of somethin' else," growled Jimmy, whose conscience had been ill at ease for some hours now on the subject to which his mother alluded.

"No, Jimmy, I can't; I can't think of nothin' else night or day; I'm always seein' that poor woman at the toll-gate, standin' so pale in her black gown, as we come through when the hoppin' was over; poor thing, she spoke so gentle, and looked so meek; and I've known others as would have cursed and swore, knowin' the boy was innocent; oh, I turned sick when I see her, and couldn't look her in the face."

Jimmy made no remark, and for a few moments there was silence; it was broken by the boy beginning to eat his supper.

"I wish you'd have some," he said to his mother, "I daresay you've had nothink all day."

The woman regarded him curiously.

"You seem very kind, Jimmy, all on a sudden," she remarked at length.

The boy ceased eating a moment or two, and looked at her.

"Kind," he echoed, "that's what the gentleman's been to me, kind; 'you look as if you was hungry,' he says, 'take this and get somethin' for supper,' and then he give me the shillin'; but I aint hungry,"

continued Jimmy wearily, leaning his head against the wall, "I feel so tired."

It struck his mother at last, as she continued to look at him, that a change of some description had come over the boy; his eyes were too bright, his lips parched, his cheeks more sunken than they had ever appeared before.

"Aint you well, Jimmy?" she asked.

"I don't know," replied the boy, "I feel tired."

The woman rose, and began to heap up in a corner some straw that was strewn about the room, as she did so the door opened and a policeman looked in.

"Ten o'clock to-morrow morning at the police court," he said sharply, "mind you're both there."

The woman nodded, and Jimmy replied "All right."

"Clearing off here?" asked the constable, rapidly scanning the nearly empty room.

"Looks like it, don't it?" said the boy.

The officer made no further remark, but closed the door and went away.

"You'd best come and lay down on this straw, Jimmy," said his mother, when they were once more alone, "I've made you a piller of some old bits, and I can cover you with my shawl."

"And you'll make off in the night while I'm asleep, won't yer?" remarked the boy, regarding his mother doubtfully.

"No," was the quiet reply, "I'm not goin' off just yet."

"But you was when I come in."

"Well, I'm not now," was the answer in the same quiet tones.

Jimmy made no further remark, but walked wearily over to the straw, and lay down.

"I say," he said presently, "it's a awful cold night, aint it; now, don't you go takin' off your shawl," he added, as his mother began unfastening

that threadbare garment, "just you sit there, and keep it wrapped round yer."

The woman at once desisted, and again took her seat on the ground by the fireless grate.

An hour or two passed away, Jimmy had fallen into an uneasy slumber, and the wretched rush-light had almost burnt itself out; by its last, faint flicker the silent figure by the empty hearth rose, took off the flimsy shawl in which it had been enveloped, walked with noiseless footstep over to the sleeping boy, and wrapped it softly round him, then retreated once more to the seat by the hearth, rested its weary head against the wall, and fell into a troubled sleep.

Misty and cold the next morning broke gradually over the city and its environs, and found Jimmy and his mother prepared to attend the constable to the police-court. The remains of the bread and meat had been consumed for breakfast, and the woman and boy were discussing the best investment for the remaining half-pence.

"I say," said Jimmy, breaking off abruptly from the subject, "hadn't we best try and keep on here till we know what we're goin' to do?"

"Yes," said his mother, "I must try and earn the rent somehow, and we must make shift now the things is gone; we're not the only ones as has to do it."

"And then," continued the boy, paying little heed to his mother, "when the warm weather comes, we can tramp."

"I've got some work to do before *that* time," remarked the woman quietly.

"I hope I shan't ache so," said Jimmy, clasping his knees as he sat on the ground, and swaying himself to and fro, "my arms and legs is dreadful."

"I believe you're goin' to be ill, Jimmy," observed his mother, ceasing a minute or two from her endeavours to make the miserable room tidy, and regarding the boy almost anxiously.

"Do yer? what do you think's goin' to be the matter with me?" asked the boy with something like fear in his eyes.

"Can't say; maybe only a cold."

"Oh, come then," said Jimmy impatiently, getting up from the floor, and shivering violently as he did so, "let's be off, and get this magistrate's business over."

So they turned out into the dismal streets, and wended their way to the police-court. There they passed the best part of the morning, as the case for which they attended did not come on first for hearing, but when it had been fairly gone through, and the prisoner committed to take his trial for manslaughter, Jimmy and his mother found themselves once more at liberty; the former to return to his heap of straw in the "top-floor back," the latter to pursue her wretched calling as a vendor of water-cresses and red herrings.

And thus the day wore on, and evening again gathered round them with its darkness, and dreariness, and mist, and cold, and hunger, and wretchedness. Yet Jimmy, whose aches and pains had considerably increased since the morning, had in no way relinquished his determination to meet the stranger as promised, and to go to church. Punctually at eight o'clock therefore, he was at the corner of the quiet street where the conversation of the foregoing evening had taken place. He had not to wait above five minutes before the Missioner arrived.

"I am glad to see you, boy," he said, "very glad; have you been waiting long?"

"No," replied Jimmy, "I'm only just come."

They walked on silently together towards the church.

"I bought some food with that shillin' you give me," observed the boy after a few minutes, "I didn't spend it for nothin' else."

The Missioner seemed pleased.

"I did not expect that you would," he said quietly, "I believed you when you promised me you would not."

If Jimmy could have defined the feeling that came over him as he listened to these words, it would have been that, for the first time in his life, he experienced a sense of moral elevation, a sense of his personal capacity for being other than that most degraded of all beings, a Liar; the sensation was a pleasing one; he had spoken the truth, and he had been believed, and he had, withal, that inner consciousness of the fearlessness which is born of perfect candour only; he could look the whole world in the face, for truth involves no avoiding one's fellowmen, no downward glances, no guilty change of countenance; it stands erect, great in its grand simplicity, awful, though surrounded by persecutions, in its denunciation of all Liars.

"Here we are," said the Missioner at length, as they reached the church, "follow me, and you shall sit close to where I stand when I speak to the people."

Jimmy obeyed, and they walked up the middle aisle together.

"Sit there," whispered the clergyman, pointing to a bench near the chancel, and then he went on to the vestry, and the church began to fill.

A great number of the boys assembled were intimate associates of Jimmy, partners in his sins, and in his punishments; boys in whom, dare we admit such an idea, wickedness would seem to be inborn; a terrible array of youthful souls to rise in the Day of Final Reckoning against the wealthy, and the learned, and the great of the first city in the world. The outcast boy and his friends had never met before on such an occasion as the present; some seemed to regard it as a kind of joke; others were doubtful as to the amusement that might be afforded: a certain

set, remarkable for dexterity in lightening other people's pockets, appeared to consider that a bad investment had been made of Time, when they looked round on the ragged congregation, out of which, the lightest fingers could clearly extract nothing; only a few, only a very few had come with the conviction that there was something serious in the object for which they were collected together that evening, and one of that forlorn company was Jimmy.

The Missioner came out of the vestry and took his place in the Reading-Desk, then knelt for a few minutes in silent prayer. All the eager eyes of the motley assemblage were turned on him as he made his appearance, the idle murmuring ceased, and an impressive stillness reigned throughout the edifice. In the midst of the stillness he rose, and looked slowly and searchingly all round the church, along every line of outcasts, scanning, as it seemed to them, each individual boy; then in tones which found an echo in every heart he commenced thus:

"I saw a Great White Throne, and Him that sat on It; from Whose Face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God. And the Books were opened; and another Book was opened, Which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the Books—according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and Death—and Hell—delivered up the dead which were in them; and they were judged *every man* according to their works. And Death— and Hell—were cast into the Lake of Fire. This—is the Second Death. And *Whosoever was not found written in the Book of Life*—was cast into the Lake of Fire."

Fear, supernatural fear, was stamped on every face as the Missioner at the conclusion of his reading from Holy Scripture, came down into the aisle, and

stood among the boys. Who was this man? they asked within themselves. What were these terrible Words he had been uttering? Had *he* the power to kill, and to destroy? But he was about to speak again, and every ear was bent in rapt attention.

"Boys," cried the Missioner, comprehending the whole assemblage with one grand sweep of his eyes, "in those Awful Books of Which I have just been reading, *your* names, and *my* name are already written, and against them are set down in terrible array our evil thoughts, and deeds, and words. And someday we shall stand before that Great White Throne, and give an account to the Lord God Almighty of how we have spent every moment of our lives. Boys—this is a fearful thought! The sins of one day are too dreadful to reflect upon,—what must be the sins of a whole life-time, massed together, heaped up, and crying aloud for judgment in that Great Day of Doom! And yet, boys, ye have your choice whether or not your names shall be also written in the Book of Life, for if they are written *there*, the entries in the other Books will all be blotted out; there shall be none to bring an accusation against ye, for ye shall be called the Children of God.

Oh, boys, let it be your choice to forsake Evil, and to cleave to Good. By cleaving to Good, you cling to God. By forsaking Evil, you cast off the Devil. Poor, sin-sick, weary hearts," continued the Missioner, in tones of the deepest compassion, "I would not be too hard upon you; maybe, you are starving; maybe, you are friendless, homeless, fatherless, motherless; maybe, you have been driven into cheating, and lying, and stealing, to gain your daily bread; oh, for such as you, the Gate of Mercy is open wide. There is the Bread of Life, and there is the Water of Life, whosoever eateth and drinketh thereof shall never hunger and thirst any more.

Come, ye homeless ones, to God your King; for the City with the Golden Street is yours, your Home for ever, if ye will but walk whilst here on earth in the paths of Truth, and Purity, and Peace. Come, ye motherless, and fatherless, to God your Father; He will shelter you from the storm, and rain, and wind; He will feed you, and clothe you, and nourish you, and call you by His Name; oh, turn not a deaf ear unto His cry; hear—and your souls shall live.

For—listen—(here the Missioner's voice became steady and calm)—if ye will *not* hear, ye shall—die. If ye will *not* forsake the Devil, and all the evil desires of your own hearts, ye shall—die. If ye will have other gods than the Perfect and Righteous Saviour, ye shall—die. If ye shall love anything or anybody in this evil world better than your Father Which is in Heaven, ye shall—die. If ye shall take the Name of the Lord your God in vain, by which I mean, if you use that Holy Name when you curse and swear, ye shall—die. If ye dishonour the Lord's own Day—the blessed Sunday which He has given us in Love for a day of Rest and Peace—if on that Day, ye continue to work your wickedness, and revel in your sin, ye shall—die. If ye do not love, and serve, and honour the father and mother God has given you here on earth—your days shall be cut off from the land, ye shall surely—die. It ye take away the life of a fellow-creature in hatred and malice, ye shall be called a Murderer, ye shall—die. If ye shall work anything that is corrupt, or defile your souls and lips by impure thoughts and words, ye shall—die. If ye shall take that which is not yours, but another man's, whether it be his cloak, or his good name, or anything that is his—if ye cheat and steal—ye shall be called a Thief, ye shall—die. If ye shall bear false witness against your neighbour, if, by your lies and treachery ye shall condemn the innocent, and give over a fellow-creature

to undeserved punishment, ye shall receive the reward of your iniquity, ye shall surely—die. If ye shall only *desire* to have that which is not yours; if ye shall long to possess that which God has forbidden you to have; if ye are only restrained by the fear of man from acting out your wickedness—ye have transgressed the Law—ye are Thieves in heart—*ye shall*—DIE."

For a few moments there was a solemn pause, and the Missioner stood contemplating the white, upturned faces of the boys, as Moses might have stood when he descended from Mount Sinai with the Tables of Testimony. But when he spoke again the tones of his voice were soft and persuasive.

"Boys," he said, "you must not mistake the meaning of my words when I tell you, as I have just been doing, that for all wickedness, such as I have described, ye must die—I do not mean that you must merely suffer the natural death which weekly takes hundreds from your midst, but that it is the *Second* Death ye ought so greatly to fear—the Lake of Fire—into which Death, and Hell shall be cast—and whosoever is *not found written* in the Book of Life—and, whosoever *loveth*—and *maketh* a Lie! Oh! Lies are horrible;" continued the Missioner with energy, "the Devil, their father, is horrible. Hell—is horrible—and Hell is overflowing with Liars;—overflowing—and yet stretching out its greedy arms for more—stretching them out for you and me, if we forsake for one moment the paths of Truth,—opening wide its fiery gates to engulph us everlastingly, if the black Lie-marks on our souls have not been washed away.

Now—listen—boys—The Mighty and Glorious God Who for ever and ever sits on the Great White Throne in the City with the Golden Street, would have us appear before Him whiter than that snow which, a few days since, was lying pure and untrod-

den over all the land. Now,—we cannot make *ourselves* white—even, if, of our own free will, we left off from this moment all sin and wickedness, the hideous stains of the former evil we have committed must ever remain on our souls—only the Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Most High God, can remove them—can wash away the Lie-marks which are so hateful to Perfect Truth, and make us pure, even as He is pure,—and to give us His Precious Blood, this Sinless Lamb of God left His place at the Right Hand of His Father, and came to dwell on earth as one of us. He toiled for His daily bread, as many of you may toil; He was hungry, and thirsty, as, I am sure, all you have often been; He had nowhere to lay His Head, as many of you have not; He was like unto you in all things, Sin only excepted. And so He can feel for your sorrows—and He *does* feel for them—He yearns over you as a loving Elder Brother—He would have you come unto Him that you may have Life—He would cast out all your fear, and bring you to His Home with Joy.

For He knows how few and evil are the days of your existence here on earth,—He knows your bitter temptations—your frail, human nature—He knows how hard it is for you to resist the Devil when he tempts you to take that which is not yours, and you, maybe, are sick, and faint with hunger. Ah—He knows all about you—for He has died for you—He was taken by cruel men, and nailed by His Hands and Feet to a rough, wooden Cross—and there He hung until He died—for *you*. Yes, boys, for *you*—that the Blood which fell from those Cruel Wounds might wash the Lie-marks, and the stains of Evil from your souls. And all He requires of you is this: that you shall forsake your present course of life—that you shall cease from all wickedness,—and learn to be perfect in all goodness—that you shall

hate the Devil, and love God. He alone can give you strength for the battle which lies before you; He alone can make you to conquer in the Fight. Let us pray to Him."

The Missioner knelt down, as he uttered the last words, and all the ragged crew immediately followed his example.

"O Lord God, Holy and True," was the fervent prayer of this earnest man, and faithful priest, "I bring before Thee in humble faith, these—Thy poor children. They are starving, Lord, in body and soul,—feed them. They are covered with the foul stains of many sins,—wash them. Fill their hearts with sorrow for the Past, and when they repent—forgive them. Lord, in this evil world their lot has fallen among thieves--they are lying by the wayside of Life sorely wounded by their dread Enemy—the Devil;—their half-dead souls have no voice with which to cry unto Thee—and their fellow-creatures, maybe, too often pass them by on the other side. But, come, Thou Good Samaritan in Thy Perfect Love, and heal them;—bind up their broken hearts—give them medicine to heal their sickness—pour in the oil and wine of Thy Saving Grace—and they shall be whole.

And now, O Dearest Lord, I would supplicate that Thy Most Holy Spirit may come, and dwell within the hearts of these Thy children, and guide them into all Truth. Slay, O Blessed One, the Lying spirit within them; make them to hate lies with a bitter hatred from this night forward;—make them to forsake every evil way;—uphold them with the Strength of Thy Right Hand. When they are tempted to steal—to take that which is not theirs—O cry aloud in their souls, 'Sin not, Sin not—I, The Lord, thy God, can see thee;'—when they are tempted to despair, to doubt Thy Love, and Goodness, and Saving Power, whisper to them in their

sore grief, in their bitter anguish, 'I, The Lord, will sustain thee.' And now, O Precious Saviour, I commit these dear children to Thy loving care in perfect faith, and humble hope. Thou hast promised not to quench the smoking flax, nor to break the bruised reed—and Thou art faithful Who hast promised;—I can trust Thee, Dearest Lord—I can trust Thee with these reeds so sorely bruised, so crushed by sin, and wretchedness;—I can believe that Thou wilt plant them by the River of Life, and give them to drink of its waters freely; and I can go on my way rejoicing through this evil world, with the sure, and blessed hope that Thou wilt remember both them and me in the Kingdom of Thy Christ. Amen—Amen."

In the long hush that followed the prayer, the boys still remained on their knees, with their faces hidden; nor did they stir when the Missioner, turning round and standing erect, raised his hands and pronounced the benediction.

"The Lord bless you—and keep you. The Lord make His Face to shine upon you—and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift up His Countenance upon you—and, give you—Peace."

Again a long stillness, so long and solemn, that Jimmy began to think it would never end, and was almost hoping so, for a strange numbness had come over him, and all desire to return to that tramping life outside the church, that weary plodding through the mud and mist, seemed to have forsaken him; there was, indeed, only one great longing in his poor, sinful heart, and that was to pour out the tale of his evil life into the ear of the Missioner. But it was some time before the church was clear, for many of the boys with eager and tear-stained faces gathered round the clergyman, who, as on the previous evening, laid aside his surplice and stole, and mingling with the forlorn souls for whom he had been so ear-

nestly praying, comforted, exhorted, entreated, according to the necessities of each sad case.

At length the last lingerer disappeared, and the Missioner slowly walked back up the empty church to the bench where he had left Jimmy—poor Jimmy—waiting to cast aside the hideous rags of his sin, and to be arrayed in the "fine linen, clean and white, which is the righteousness of saints." He rose to his feet as the Missioner approached, and stood trembling before him.

"You look ill, my poor boy," said the clergyman compassionately.

"I feel cur'ous," replied Jimmy, shivering; "but I feel most about them wicked things I've done; I'm a reg'lar bad boy; there aint nothin' I says and does that isn't bad; I tell lies constant, exceptin' about that shillin'; I can't recollect half what things I've stole; I can't recollect nothin' exceptin' what's bad; but," continued Jimmy, suddenly looking up into the Missioner's face, and speaking with a great terror in his sunken eyes, "I did somethin' last autumn awful wicked; it wasn't here in London I did it, it was down in Surrey where we all went hoppin'; down in Surrey, a good way the other side of Epsom; we was all hoppin' on the Deep-Dale, and father—he grumbled, because Farmer Wilson wouldn't give him what pay he asked for, and he says to me, and mother, he'd make him remember it, he'd spite him somehow, and so he set light to the wheat-stacks one evenin', just after dusk, and I helped him; and the wheat-stacks, they blazed up awful, and then the thrashin' barns caught light, and they was all burnt down."

Jimmy paused a few moments, and took his breath quickly, but the Missioner was still regarding him with the same compassionate look, so he took courage, and continued:

"Nobody know'd what father and me done, be-

cause all the folks was away that night at the fair; and there was a boy in the village as was always doin' mischief,—his mother lives at the pike on the main road,—and so father and me says *he* did it, and he was took to jail, and then I swore before the magistrates as I see *him* firin' of the stacks, so then they took and sent him off to Horsemonger-Lane, and he's got to be tried next 'Sizes."

The compassionate expression on the Missioner's face had changed to one of great seriousness; Jimmy was quick in perceiving it, and anticipated his condemnation.

"I shall die for doin' of all this—shan't I?" he said sadly; "I mean I shall have to die agin' after I'm put in the ground, die a second time as you was speakin' on?"

"Yes—boy," was the almost stern reply, "Everlasting punishment in the Lake of Fire is the just reward for such wickedness as yours; you have borne false witness, you have sworn to a grievous Lie, and unless you repent truly of your sin, unless you confess to God and man all the evil you have wrought against the innocent, you must surely die that Awful Second Death. But the Great Lord God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked; He desires that they should turn from their sin, and live; He cries aloud in His Mercy and Love, 'Turn ye—turn ye from your evil ways; for why—will ye—die!' Yet, listen—boy,—your sin can never be pardoned until you have restored what you unjustly took, as far as lies in your power. Now,—you have taken away the good name of your fellow-creature; you have caused him to be shut up in prison for a crime which he never committed, in fact, for *your* crime. You must undo all this—you must set that poor lad free; you must be willing to be taken to judgment and to prison, and to suffer punishment for breaking the laws of your country; and, above all—to think no

punishment too great for breaking the Law of your God. And then—but remember this—only *then*, will the Lord Jesus Christ have compassion upon you; only *then*, will He wash away all the evil from your heart, and remember you when He comes into His Kingdom; only *then*, can you wear the white raiment of the redeemed, and sit with the Blessed Jesus on the Right Hand of God. Have you understood me—boy?"

"Yes," replied Jimmy in a faint voice, sinking down on the bench against which he had been leaning; "I'll go very soon, and say what I've done; I'll do all what you've been tellin' me," and his head sank low on his bosom as he was speaking.

"You are right, boy—go to-morrow morning; lose no further time, or you may be too late. I could tell you of someone," continued the Missioner in tones so full of sadness that Jimmy looked up at him wonderingly, "who once did almost as wicked a thing as you have done, *quite* as wicked in the sight of God; who accused two fellow-creatures falsely. and they were cruelly punished; they were separated from their father and mother in their old age, and held up to the scorn and derision of their associates, and neighbours; they were forsaken by all—but God. And the Evil prospered; but only for a time. Yet, when this erring soul was brought to a sense of its awful wickedness—and desired to make some amends for the bitter misery endured by the innocent,—*It was Too Late!* There was found no place of repentance, though it was sought for carefully with tears."

The voice ceased, and there was a silence, broken after a few moments by the church bells chiming for another Service.

"And so, boy," resumed the Missioner, "I would have you lose no time in confessing your sin. Remember,—if you do not confess it *now*, and take

your punishment patiently here on earth,—you *must* stand before the Judgment-seat of Christ, and receive the reward of your iniquity—The Second Death. But I have faith in you, that you will keep your word with me, and clear the innocent; and then I can hope to meet you in that bright and glorious City where you will hunger and thirst no more, and where you will be called a child of God."

They had been walking down the aisle as the Missioner was speaking, and had now reached the door.

"I'm goin' now," said Jimmy, "I'm goin' straight off to do what you've been tellin' me; you'll hear of it somehow, I daresay, perhaps in the papers; anyhow, I'm off."

"And take God's Blessing with you," murmured the Missioner, raising his right hand slowly, as standing by the churchyard gate he watched the rapidly retreating form of the outcast boy. And thus they parted—the rebuker of Lies, and the rebuked,—to meet no more on this perilous side of the Dark River.

CHAPTER XIII.

VILLAGE SYMPATHY.

It was a cold, windy evening in March, and the trees and hedgerows along the Surrey roads and lanes were looking much as they did in the two previous months, for the Spring was very late—not a sign of leaf or blossom could Jane Hartley find in all her little garden, it looked as desolate as her own sad life, into which no ray of hope had as yet been

shed. The reports she received of Phil through Mr. Lyle, who gained his information from the chaplain of the jail, were very comforting. The boy had kept his word with the Rector, and had laid to heart his earnent exhortations, and the jail authorities gave him the very best of characters.

So far then, there had been a "bow" in the dark cloud which had shadowed the existence of his widowed mother, and Jane in her true humility had learnt to thank God for the great affliction which, by His Mercy, had wrought such a good work in her careless boy. There were moments, of course, when her human nature rebelled against the heavy burden which had been laid on her; when, as time wore on, and no prospect of relief was held out from any quarter, she was tempted to cry aloud in her haste, "I am cast out of the sight of Thine Eyes;" and it was in such a frame of mind that Ned Sawyer found her sitting by her neat hearth on this windy March evening.

"I've brought ye summut, Mis' Hartley," said he, as with some difficulty he managed to shut the door against which the wind was driving violently, "they're apples we've kep' from the summer; I thought ye'd like to have them, because they growed on poor Phil's favourite tree." He walked to the little centre table, as he spoke, and began untying the red cotton handkerchief in which he had brought his present.

"Oh, what beauties, Ned," exclaimed Jane, rising from her chair, and coming forward to examine the fruit, "you've brought me the very best, I know."

Ned grinned, and his eyes sparkled with delight. "They're the *very* best, Mis' Hartley," he replied, "mother and me's been pickin' of them out."

Jane wiped away the tears which had risen to her eyes.

"You're all so good to me," she said, "I can't see how I deserve it."

"Oh," remarked Ned, sitting down in a chair he found by the fire, "you deserves to have everythink what's good."

"Who says so?" asked Jane with a faint smile.

"Oh, everybody says so," replied Ned, who rarely quoted an individual authority, but who was generally pretty correct as to the popular feeling and opinion of his native village; "everybody says as you didn't ought to have such trouble as you've got to bear."

Jane sighed; she was not in the frame of mind just then to give the answer she would otherwise have done to this remark; she felt more inclined to echo the sentiments of "everybody."

"Aint you had a rare, lonesome winter too," continued Ned, intending to administer comfort by his remarks; "Phil's been gone such a long time; it don't seem no easier to bear now, do it, nor it was when he was first took? I know all us at home feel it just the same; mother, she do cry—of nights, yer know, when she sits down to rest a bit; and little Ben we can't make happy nohow—he says he wants to be took to the prison along of Phil."

Jane sat looking gloomily into the fire. "I know you all feel for me," she said sadly, "and you're all a deal too kind; but it does seem a long, long time to keep on waiting and hoping; and next week is the Assizes, and just think what it'll be after that!"

"Mother and me was talkin' of the 'Sizes just afore I come out," observed Ned, "she said she's afraid you'll get thinkin' too deep about 'em; she called after me up the lane as I was to tell yer to keep up, because when night's darkest, dawn's nighest."

"Ah," replied Jane, "I'm afraid that's only true when people are dying, there doesn't seem any dawn on this side the grave."

"I'm sure I can't say," returned Ned, whose individual experiences did not permit of his giving an

opinion on the subject, no very dark shadows, with the exception of his father's death, having ever fallen upon his life; "I'm sure I can't say, but mother in generally says what's right; she always used to say about Master Smyles' horse down at the Water-Mill, as they'd lock the stall when the steed was stole, and so they do, they locks up the stable reg'lar every night now, and the horse aint been found yet, its been gone a week, and they thinks them gypsies has got it."

"It must be a great loss to them," said Jane, "I was very sorry to hear of it, for Master Smyles isn't over rich; but there, he's a well-meaning, good-living man, so most like the Lord will make it up to him somehow."

"That's just what mother says," returned Ned, who evidently regarded his only remaining parent as an oracle, "she says, as we was pickin' out them apples, as the Lord will sure make up the horse to Master Smyles, and your trouble to you, Mis' Hartley."

Jane's face flushed, and she looked at the youth. "You make me feel ashamed, Ned," she said, "here am I expecting the Lord to be good and gracious to Master Smyles, and doubting about His caring just the same for me; oh, Ned, I wonder He don't forget me altogether. I'm so ungrateful."

Ned sat and stared sympathetically at his companion, swinging his leg.

"I wonder He takes any notice of me at all," continued Jane, looking into the bright glow of the fire, "I often wonder."

"*I* don't," returned Ned, shaking his head wisely, "why, Mis' Hartley, if He takes notice of sparrers when they falls to the ground, do you think it's likely He'd take no notice of you?"

"You're very kind, Ned, to put me in mind of the loving-kindness of the Lord," replied Jane meekly,

who was not above receiving instruction and comfort from even such a simple lad as Ned, "I should do well if I thought oftener of the sayings and doings of our dear Saviour, instead of what I'd like Him to be doing just for me alone; but—hark! Ned, isn't that some one at the door?"

The lad rose to see who was knocking, as he did so, the latch was lifted, and Master Giles walked in.

"Good evenin', Mis' Hartley; oh, you're here, Mast' Ned, are you—turned gossip, eh?"

"No, I aint been gossipin'," laughed Ned good temperedly, "we've been talkin' quite ser'ous."

"What is it you call ser'ous?" inquired the waggoner, his eyes twinkling with amusement at the simplicity of the lad, as he took the seat by the fire Jane offered him.

"Oh," replied Ned, "Master Smyles' horse and sich."

"Oh, Master Smyles' horse," repeated Giles sententiously, "well, without any disrespect to Master Smyles, I can't help thinkin' as he desarves to lose his horse; 'Look here, now,' I says to him last week, or the week afore, I forgets which, 'look here, now, them 'ere gypsies has got their eye on that 'ere horse of yourn, as you never did, and never do, and never will lock up; so you'd better keep a good look out.' Well, what d'ye think he says in answer? 'Poor things,' he says, 'I don't think they mean any harm.' 'No, they don't to theirselves,' says I, and I walks off. Howsome'er, I met him along the road this mornin', looking very down indeed. 'Well,' I says, 'you've heerd no news of that 'ere horse yet, I s'pose?' 'No,' he says, in a doleful sort of way, 'I've heerd nothin'; I can't think where it's took itself off to.' 'Took itself off,' I repeats, out of all patience, 'who's took it, you mean.' 'Well,' he says. 'I hope whoever's got it, as they're feedin' of it well, and won't let it come to no hurt.' Now, you

know, Mis' Hartley," continued Giles, in a manner which clearly conveyed the small opinion he entertained of the judgment and worldly wisdom of the miller, " there aint no argyin' with a man like that, a man as'll let anybody rob him, and then make excuses for them; but there, between you and me, you know," added the waggoner in conclusion, "he's a little bit soft."

"I think," replied Jane quietly, who had been attentively listening to the old man, "I think Master Smyles is a very charitable — "

" Oh, yes," interrupted Giles, "he's all that, anybody knows; why, look how he goes strewin' corn about them bits of fields he's got over by Crick's Hollow, for the gleaners to go in and get summut, he says, because the reapers don't leave enough."

" Well, you see," returned Jane, " he's read in the Bible he ought to do that, I suppose; but I didn't mean charitable in that sort of way; I mean, he never thinks ill of people—he isn't always doubting and suspecting them."

" Well, no; he's a very good sort in his way," observed Master Giles reflectively, to whom it occurred at that moment how intimately acquainted he was with a person who, until very lately, doubted and suspected everybody; "but you see, Mis' Hartley, carryin' things too far anyway never leads to no good; now, I don't mind ownin' of it, a few months ago I looked on a'most everybody as robbers and plunderers; well, that was goin' too far one way, warn't it? Still, I hope I shan't get like Master Smyles, who a'most lets his horse be taken away from under his very eyes, because that's goin' too far the other wav, aint it? "

" Well, perhaps it is," said Jane; "I think people ought to be careful, and not put temptations in other folks' way; it's wrong to be too easy, I'm quite sure; it isn't kind to others, and encourages wickedness,

but poor Master Smyles don't think of that, I daresay, or else he wouldn't do it; still, I often wish there were more like him in the world; if there were, my poor Phil mighn't be shut up in prison as he is."

"Ah," remarked Giles, "your Phil; that makes me think of summut I heerd only this mornin'; I can't rightly say whether it's good or bad news, but this I know, it aint no hearsay. It's the 'Sizes next week, as I dessay you know, and Master Mills is lookin' after his witnesses, and when he goes to London to see what's become of that 'ere hoppin' lad, he finds he's gone, made off somewheres—mother too, father too, leastways, the father's dead; but anyhow, the others is off, and Master Mills, I can tell ye, looks very down. Now, don't go buildin' of hopes on this 'ere news," continued Giles in a tone of warning, as he saw a brightness come into Jane's face that had been absent from it so long, "there mayn't be nothin' in it after all, nothin' good for you, I mean; but I must say it looks rayther queer,"

"Oh, I daren't hope, I daren't," cried Jane, struggling to suppress the sanguine feelings which would spring up in her heart.

"You'd best not," replied Master Giles with his wisest manner, "and then you won't get disapp'inted; but, look here, Mis' Hartley, if you've a mind to go to Kingston next week, and hear the trial, there's my littlest waggin' as you're very welcome to, and I'd be very happy to drive ye."

"You're very good, Master Giles, I'm sure," returned Jane gratefully, "and I thank you kindly."

"There's Fanny Lawson as'll come and keep the pike, *I* know," interrupted Ned Sawyer, who had been listening to the waggoner's sage remarks and recital of news with such ever-increasing surprise that the expression of his countenance had just reached the verge of imbecility.

"Yes, I'm sure she would," replied Jane; "but I was going to say Phil has sent word that he don't want me to be there; he says he shan't feel brave if he sees me, and he doesn't want to break down; besides, Mr. Lyle thinks I'd best not go, and he's always right."

"Well, I should say he was pretty generally," returned Master Giles in a convincing tone, "but there, if you feels inclined to change your mind, you know, the little waggin's always ready, and at your service." The old man rose, as he spoke, and pushed back his chair.

"Thank you kindly," again replied Jane, as she shook hands warmly with her well-meaning old friend; "I'm afraid you'll have a bad walk back to Hillington."

"Oh, never mind that," returned Giles; "I thought ye'd like to hear the news early, whether it's good or bad; well, good night, Mis' Hartley; good night, you Ned; now don't ye go about openin' of your mouth to fill other peoples'; tell your mother, in course, but don't go gettin' of a gossip, and tell-talin' about the village; that talkin' leads to no end of trouble; in short," added Giles conclusively, as he buttoned up his coat, and opened the door, "it leads to the very Devil." With these words of salutary warning to his young friend, the waggoner after many violent efforts succeeded in shutting the door, and took his departure.

"Do you think I go tell-talin' about the village, Mis' Hartley?" asked Ned ruefully, who could not quite see why his old friend should have directed his attack against him; "I'm sure I never tell nobody anythin', exceptin' it's mother, and maybe you, or Fanny Lawson."

"Oh, Ned, you mustn't mind Mast' Giles," said Jane in a mollifying tone, "he's wonderful well-meaning; but he knows you're young, and old people

have a right to give advice to young folk, they've seen so much of the world and its ways; so don't take it to heart too much, Ned; it wasn't meant unkind."

"There'll be no harm in tellin' mother what Mast' Giles has been sayin', I s'pose?" inquired the lad, rolling up the red handkerchief in which he had brought the apples, preparatory to departure.

"Oh, no," replied Jane, "no harm at all; good night, my lad, and thank you kindly for the apples, and coming to see me; you must tell your mother how pleased I was."

"Good night, Mis' Hartley," said Ned with his usual grin of delight, his ruffled feelings by this time quite even again, "I shall be lookin' in again soon, I daresay."

So saying, he ran off, and Jane was left alone to speculate, as she could not help doing, as to the effect Jimmy's disappearance might have on Phil's impending trial, and, despite her efforts to exclude the hope which might never be realized, she found it impossible not to admit just one little ray; so weak is human nature, so ready to grasp at shadows, so eager to pursue the phantoms which are ever waiting to lure us from yielding a perfect obedience, a perfect trust to a God, Who, in His own right time, will make His promise good that Faith shall be lost in sight, and patient Hope crowned with Endless Joy. But human nature *is* weak, and Jane was very human, and very lonely by her silent hearth without poor Granny, and her bright, careless boy; so the little ray streamed in, and sat as an angel before her the remainder of the evening.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE LENT ASSIZES.

The high March winds were still blowing over the Surrey downs, when the judges arrived at Kingston, and the business of the assizes commenced.

Witnesses crowded into the town from all parts, for the calendar that spring was unusually heavy, and many were the visitors which arrived from Hillington, and its surrounding villages, the trial of so young a lad as Philip Hartley for such a flagrant crime as arson, having attracted considerable local attention.

The court was very much crowded, and several ladies, amongst them Miss Hazelwood and her niece, sat on the bench. The Squire had yielded to the importunities of his sister and daughter that they might come to poor Phil's trial, and so, accompanied by Mr. Lyle, they had driven over to Kingston that morning.

A true bill having been found against Philip Hartley, the poor lad was summoned by name, and after a few moments, without any noticeable trepidation, he walked into the dock, and stood before the bar.

There was a calmness in the boy's manner, a serenity in the general expression of his countenance, a fearlessness, without boldness, in the unfaltering glance of his clear, blue eyes, which impressed the beholders greatly in his favour, and was not unnoticed by the Judge himself, though perhaps it was more particularly observed by those who remembered the sullenness of his aspect when examined before the magistrates at Hillington.

But Phil's heart and mind had undergone a great change since then; the hatred and bitterness his undeserved punishment had called forth had now

yielded to that perfect trust in a Divine Power, that unswerving reliance on the promises of a Just God, which is born of conscious innocence only. As the boy stood before his Judge, and that crowded court, his heart was very full; a sweet vision rose before him of the home he might not see again for many years, never again, as a boy; the winding road along the breezy downs, and the little toll-house sheltered by the hill; the wide-spreading woods, in which he had spent long summer days tracing the cuckoo to its haunts, and striving to imitate the songs which birds can only sing; the wild furze-grown common stretching away from the woods to the downs; the pleasant fields, and lanes; and the plash of the great wheel of the water-mill down in the hollow seemed to be sounding in his ear far above the din, and disturbance of the busy Court. Who led blind Kathy to church now, he was wondering, and who would lead her in the years to come, the years which must be passed before he should again be free, for the severity of the sentence usually passed on anyone convicted of the crime of which he was accused, had not been kept from him; indeed, he had been told to prepare himself for nothing less. But perhaps the poor old woman would die long before he was free; Phil almost hoped she might, for he had read of One since he had been in prison, Who would lead all the blind, and the sick, and the weary, to Living Fountains of Waters. And little Ben, the cripple! how he would have to lie on the wooden couch Phil and Ned had jointly made for him, all through the golden days of the bright, coming summer; who would there be to carry him out to the shade of the apple tree in the orchard, and then climb for the largest cluster of ripe cherries that could be found, and which the poor little wasted hands were working so anxiously to clasp? Phil could almost feel the clinging arms of the invalid boy round his neck, and

hear the shrill cries of delight with which he used to welcome him, and the weak, childish laughter applauding the daring exploits performed for his amusement.

No wonder with such thoughts as these filling his heart, Phil could only see on the bench before him the loving countenance of his dear Rector, and the sweet, sympathising faces of Miss Hazelwood and Emily; *they* believed in his innocence, he felt assured, and God knew he was guiltless; why should he quail before, what seemed to him, the awful majesty of his Judge? There would come a day when all in that Court, from the least to the greatest, must stand before the Great Judge of all, to receive reward according to their works. and in that Day of Perfect Justice his innocence would be made clear to men and angels; therefore he could stand with unchanging colour in that felon's dock, and listen calmly to the indictment as it was read aloud, and to that dread inquiry made by the clerk of arraigns, "How say you. prisoner at the bar, are you guilty or not guilty?"

"Not guilty," replied Philip in a clear, low voice, which was heard distinctly all over the Court, and looking his Judge steadily in the face.

There was a short pause; Mr. Lyle leant forward to make some observation to the counsel he, at his sole expense, had retained to defend the poor lad; then a slight bustle arose, and with all due formality, the counsel for the prosecution opened the case, which promised to be long and tedious, for the cross-examination of the witnesses was most searching and strict.

As the day waned, and the bright sunlight left the Court, great anxiety was visible on the countenance of the Rector, for he could not but see what little hope there was of Philip's acquittal, and it pained his tender and merciful nature to think on the drear-

anguish of poor Jane when the heavy sentence of the Judge should be made known to her.

But perhaps the most uncomfortable person in Court that day, and more especially at that particular time in the afternoon, was the Inspector from Hillington, Mr. Mills. He knew he must shortly be called on now to give an account of the witness who had failed to put in an appearance, and although the worthy man was in no way actuated by personal animosity towards the prisoner, and indeed, if his private feelings on the matter were consulted, it would be shewn that no one would rejoice more at his innocence being proved than he, yet, for his credit's sake, as a police officer, he would have liked that no "professional flaw," as he termed it, should have marred the case.

He had just reached the height of his disturbed feelings when he felt himself tapped on the shoulder from behind; turning round, he beheld a constable of the Kingston division.

"You're wanted outside," said the officer, "a woman wants you."

The Inspector hesitated a moment; he did not wish to be out of Court when his name should be called.

"What sort of woman?" he asked impatiently; "what does she want?"

"She looks like a tramp," was the reply, "there's a boy with her; she says she's got something to say about the case that's now on."

It darted into the Inspector's mind that Jimmy and his mother had, in some unaccountable way, turned up to make his credit good as a shrewd and observant officer, the "professional flaw" might be glossed over, might never appear at all; with as much haste, therefore, as his stiff and conventional manner would admit of with propriety, he hurriedly left the Court.

To find waiting by the steps in the cold, sunless street, the woman whose indifference had so disconcerted him in the autumn, to find her as he had seen her last, in the same old, faded shawl, and fallen back bonnet, but with an eagerness and unrest in her face which he had *not* seen before, and which had entirely superseded the blank desolation he so vividly remembered.

"Ah, I thought it was you," remarked the Inspector as he approached, rapidly scanning the miserable aspect of Jimmy, and feeling mentally disturbed as to the effect it might produce on the judicial eye and opinion of the Lord Chief Baron; "I have been looking after you for the last fortnight, but I found you had left your lodging, and no one could tell me where you'd gone."

Jimmy's been ill," said the woman; "he took a fever a month or two back, and he hasn't rightly got over it yet; it aint catchin' at all, but it keeps comin' and goin', so we thought we'd leave the lodgin', and take our way down to the Deep-Dale easy, because we'd got somethin' to say to the farmer there; but we hadn't got fur, not further than the Elephant and Castle, before we was obliged to pull up, the fever had come back on Jimmy so sharp; and when he was able to move on agin, there wasn't time to get as fur as the Deep-Dale, because we knew the Assizes was on at Kingston this week, so we come on here, and Jimmy's ready to give his evidence."

"Well, he is just in time," remarked the Inspector with alacrity, "it is most fortunate you have turned up; it's just possible, if you hadn't, the prisoner might have got off."

Mr. Mills being in advance of his companions, as he was speaking, did not see the curious half-smile which stole slowly over the woman's face; but they were now threading the mazes of the crowded Court, and only just in time, for the Inspector had barely

announced the sudden and unexpected arrival of the principal witness to the attorney for the prosecution (who immediately conveyed the intelligence to the counsel,) than Jimmy was called upon to give his evidence; poor, wretched, ragged Jimmy, who, as he ascended the witness box, was more in fear of "The Great White Throne, and Him that sat Thereon," than of the solemn Judge, and the severe punishment he was about to call down upon himself.

His appearance caused a considerable sensation in Court, the contrast between the squalor of the witness, and the respectability of the accused, calling for no little remark, and the Judge cast upon him a most searching glance. As the oath was administered, the boy was observed to tremble violently, and the Holy Book almost fell from his hands as he raised It to his lips.

"I'm afraid of what's in It," said Jimmy, in reply to a question as to the cause of his trepidation.

"Are you acquainted with the contents of that Book?" asked the Lord Chief Baron in his stern, judicial manner.

Jimmy hesitated, and looked down.

"You say you are afraid of what is in that Book, the Bible," continued his lordship, in an explanatory tone, concluding, and rightly, that the boy had not understood his question, "of what are you afraid?"

Jimmy's eyes were full of terror, but he replied in a low voice:

"Of the Lake of Fire what's kep' burnin', what goes on burnin' for ever and ever, and is—full—of—liars," (the last few words came very slowly from his lips, and the terror increased in his eyes, but then a sudden energy seemed to seize him, and he spoke rapidly;) "and I'm a Liar," continued Jimmy, "I said as him over there," (and he pointed to the prisoner as he spoke,) "had fired them wheat-stacks on the Deep-Dale, and he didn't; I said I see him

slyin' round 'em, and settin' light to 'em here and there, and I didn't; me and father fired 'em—me and father did it all, and nobody else know'd nothin' about it exceptin' mother; and father frightened her not to tell; we fired the stacks, and put it on to him," (here he again pointed to Philip,) "because we know'd the folks in the village would easy believe he done it; and father, he hated the farmer, because the farmer wouldn't give him what pay he wanted, so he said he'd spite him, he'd take it out of him somehow, and then he got me to help him fire them stacks, and then to go afore the magistrates and swear as him over there did it."

Jimmy paused for lack of breath, he had been speaking so rapidly. The Court seemed struck mute with surprise, but before it could recover, Jimmy regained his breath and resumed.

"Father's dead now—he's been dead nigh on two months,—father would never have owned to it; he know'd nothink about the Lake of Fire; more didn't I then—but I do now, and I'm afraid; I'd best be punished now, and not leave God to punish me when He opens His Books."

Again Jimmy paused. The Judge had recovered from his surprise, and now addressed him.

"Who has told you about the Lake of Fire, and the punishment for sinners?" he asked, his manner still judicial, but not quite so stern.

"It was the Mission," answered Jimmy, "the Mission back in the winter; and there was a gentleman up at Aldgate church; I see him one night talkin' to a lot of people as I was peepin' through the door, and I followed him when he come out, and then he spoke to me; it was the same night as father was killed in the afternoon through fightin' with a man as had drinked too much, and father, he'd drinked too much too; and I kep' wonderin' what place I could go to to get out of the way of God, be-

cause I heard a gentleman sayin' to another as there was somethin' awful God had got ready for Liars; so then I asked the gentleman up at Aldgate church what place there was; and he said there wasn't none, because God was everywhere, and could see everythink, and hear every word; and then he took me along of him to the church the next night, and there was a lot of other boys there, and he talked to us nice, and he frightened us too, and then he knelt down and told God all about us, and then he talked to everybody, and then—when we was alone—I told him what I'd done about them wheat-stacks, and how I swore it was him as did it," (Jimmy once more pointed to the prisoner,) "and then he up and told me what I ought to do, or else I must go and be burnt in the Lake of Fire for ever; so I come away from the church, and was goin' down to the Deep-Dale the very next mornin', but in the night I was took bad, and I've been bad a long time, but mother and me have tramped from London on purpose to say what's true now; and that's all; only I'm sorry about him over there, I'm always sorry about *him*."

There were many moist eyes in the Court as the wretched boy concluded the confession of his guilt, and for a few moments Mr. Lyle was so lost in compassion for the miserable penitent, that his joy on poor Philip's account was held in abeyance. Ah, truly, he thought, had the Angel of Justice been hovering over the falsely-accused that day, adjusting the scales with such perfect nicety, that not only was the innocence of the prisoner proved beyond all doubt, but the real culprit had been brought to judgment in the manner most acceptable to Almighty God, namely, by humble confession of his sin.

"This is clearly a case of awakened conscience," remarked the Lord Chief Baron, "let the woman, the mother of the witness, be called. What was the name of the clergyman at the Mission Service in

Aldgate church who, under God, brought you to a sense of your sin?"

This question was addressed to the witness. Jimmy shook his head.

"I don't know," was his reply, "he never said his name, he never said nothin' about hisself."

"It can be learnt on inquiry, I have no doubt," observed the Judge to the High Sheriff, who sat next him; "this is a most singular and interesting circumstance; I am convinced, also, that the boy, in the present instance, has spoken the truth."

Jimmy had vacated the witness-box by this time, and it was now filled by his mother. She gave her name, and former address, and then took the oath.

If there had been any doubt as to the veracity of the boy who had voluntarily placed himself in the power of the law, the evidence afforded by the woman altogether dispelled it. She spoke of her wretched life, of the wickedness of her husband, of the determined hostility he had expressed towards the farmer, who would not increase his pay as he requested, (this was corroborated by the farmer himself,) and then of the wilful firing of the wheat-stacks on the night of Tuesday, the 23rd of September. He had not made her acquainted with his intention; she had discovered it by accident, and then he had intimidated her into secrecy. She had nothing more to say, only to express her bitter, and unavailing sorrow for the misery her husband's and Jimmy's wickedness had brought upon the innocent.

And thus the trial which, at its commencement, had promised to end in lingering captivity for Philip, was brought to a sudden and unexpected conclusion, for the poor lad was not only fully acquitted, and declared free of all blame, but the Lord Chief Baron addressed him in terms of the warmest approbation of his exemplary conduct whilst enduring undeserved punishment.

"You have learnt suffering," observed his lordship, "in a hard school, I may truly say the very hardest, for there is nothing more intolerable to our human nature than injustice. The remembrance of the tribulation through which you have passed will doubtless influence all your future life; and from the extreme propriety with which you have conducted yourself in Court this day, under, I must say, the most trying and painful circumstances, and also from the excellent accounts I have received from the governor and chaplain of the jail in which you have been imprisoned, and from the visiting magistrates, I foresee the probability of your becoming not only a worthy and valuable member of society, but a credit and honour to your country."

Poor Philip who had been so brave, and patient all through that weary day, and who had nerved himself to hear with unflinching fortitude the dread sentence he had been taught to expect from the Judge who had inspired him with such awe, now fairly broke down at the kind and gracious words addressed to him by that august individual, and with his heart brimming over with unspeakable joy he left the dock sobbing audibly.

It would be difficult to describe the various phases of feeling through which the Inspector from Hillington had passed since Jimmy ascended the witness-box. In the plenitude of his professional pride he had brought himself to regard this trial, in which he felt he had played no unimportant part, more in the light of an abstract speculation, than as a matter of vital importance to two or three hearts at least. He had, perhaps unwittingly, thought simply of the case in its bearings on himself; the complications of it, inasmuch as the evidence against the prisoner was purely circumstantial, with the exception of that afforded by Jimmy, had called forth all his ingenuity, and he had displayed no mean capacity for discharg-

ing the duties of his office. The amazement he experienced when the wretched boy, instead of rendering the case the professional success he (the Inspector) desired it should be, began his confession of the atrocious lie to which he had sworn so deliberately at Hillington, was followed by feelings of the deepest mortification, which, with the utmost difficulty, he succeeded in hiding from his brethren of the force. But as Jimmy's revelations gradually drew towards a close, the better feelings of the man prevailed over the official conceit of the Inspector, and Mr. Mills was the first to go forward as Philip left the dock, and grasp him warmly by the hand.

The prisoner was no sooner acquitted, and instructions given for the detention of the woman and the boy in order that they might be examined before the local magistrates, than the Court rose, and business for that day was declared at an end. There was a hurried conference between the ladies from the Hall and the Rector as to how Phil should return to his home, which was brought to a close by the Squire proposing he should go with them, but when Mr. Lyle hastened to the spot where the boy was standing, free, and radiant with happiness, he found that their kind intentions had been anticipated. Farmer Wilson was holding Phil's hand firmly in his own, and speaking with evident feeling and much regret.

"I am sorry, my boy," he said, "truly sorry for the pain I have given you and your good mother; I don't think in all my life I have ever been so sorry about anything; when you have forgiven me, you must look upon me as your fast friend, for I will endeavour from this day to prove myself such."

Simple words these,—but they told more truly home than any eloquence could have done, and to regard them merely as an epitome of practical Christianity, they appeared equal, in Mr. Lyle's estimation, to the finest discourse he had ever heard.

Regret for harm done, and restitution as far as the unalterable past would admit, hand in hand, could not but convince the Rector that the Church's teaching in its fulness had taken root in the heart of his parishioner, and it was with true joy he listened to the lad's reply.

"You didn't mean to do me harm, Sir," he said, "but if you think you have, I'm sure I forgive you; I don't feel spite against anyone."

"Well, then," said the farmer, "to let people see you've forgiven me, I must drive you home to-night; I shan't feel comfortable now till I've seen you safe back with your mother, because, you see, I was the cause of your being taken from her."

As both Mr. Lyle and Philip agreed to this plan, the farmer hastened off to the inn where he had put up his horse and gig.

"Well, you, Phil," exclaimed a cheery voice behind them, before the Rector had time to make an observation to the boy; "good evenin', Master," (this was to Mr. Lyle with great respect;) "well, if I aint downright glad to see you out of that 'ere jail, my lad," and here Master Giles, for it was he, grasped Philip's right hand in both his own, and shook it violently.

"Ah, Giles," said the Rector mildly, "I did not know you were here?"

"Well, Master, I couldn't rest somehow for thinkin' of this 'ere boy; oh, Phil," he added, "I did think you was a bitter weed too, a downright good-for-nothin', that's what I thought yer; but, you see, there was Someone as know'd you warn't, Someone, as the Master there can tell you best about; and, you know," continued Giles with energy, "this is plain His work, it aint no one's elses; I never was so took aback in my life when that 'ere hoppin' lad come and said he'd sworn to a Lie; it's enough to make me leave off doubtin' everythin'; but, I say,

my boy, how are you goin' to get home? there's my littlest waggin' —"

But here Master Giles' volubility was brought to a sudden conclusion by the arrival of the Squire, with his sister and daughter.

Philip's face flushed as he beheld them, they brought to mind so vividly the home to which he was hastening, and which, in the earlier part of the day, had seemed to him such a long way off.

"I am truly glad, Philip," said the Squire, "to see you under such agreeable circumstances—altogether acquitted of the serious charge made against you; I lament that it was my painful duty last autumn to commit you for trial, more especially as it has transpired that you were unjustly accused; but the wisest of us are liable to make grave mistakes, there is but one Tribunal where Perfect Justice is to be obtained, for the reason that it is administered by Perfect Justice Itself. I foresee, with your Judge, the probability of your becoming a worthy member of society, and in that case, your undeserved punishment will not have been endured for nothing."

The gratified boy had hardly acknowledged these gracious words before the farmer arrived with his gig.

"There is no time now, Philip," remarked Mr. Lyle, as he and the boy left the Court together, "to speak to you as I would on the subject of your wonderful deliverance this day; but you must never forget that it has been entirely brought about by your All-Powerful Father which is in Heaven; no human aid could have averted the heavy sentence of the law which so nearly was pronounced against you; and the mighty arm of your God is stretched over you still, my child, therefore, cling to It, I beseech you, cling to It, until your life's end."

Philip looked at his dear Rector with very misty eyes, his heart was too full to speak, but Mr. Lyle

understood him, and shook his hand warmly as he took the vacant seat beside the farmer, and they drove rapidly off.

"Poor Jane," murmured the Rector, watching the gig as it disappeared down the street; "the rain is coming down in its season now, to water the parched ground of her long, dreary trouble, and the showers of promised blessing are ready to fall around her."

The Squire's carriage had by this time driven up, and the ladies taken their seats, Mr. Lyle, therefore, hastened to join them, and they at once took their departure.

The space in front of the Assize Court was now almost clear, only a small knot of country folks remained, who had not yet exhausted the topic of Phil's unexpected acquittal; amongst them was Master Giles seated in his waggon, with the reins in his hand, and Inspector Mills, not looking in any way crest-fallen, or feeling so, but rather yielding to the conviction that there were other and nobler ends to be attained in life than mere professional success.

"Now that's what I call a gentleman," remarked Giles, pointing with his whip after the Squire, as the carriage drove off, "he aint above ownin' of his faults; he's a proud man too, Squire Hazelwood is; there aint no prouder gentleman in all the county round."

The Inspector flushed a little, the words of the old waggoner seemed to convey a rebuke to him, though of course Giles had no such intention in making his remark.

"'The wisest of us make mistakes sometimes,' he was sayin' to that 'ere Phil just now," resumed Giles, "but it seems to me the wise and the foolish was all alike in this 'ere case, I'm sure *I* believed the very worst of that 'ere boy, and it strikes me you did too, Master."

"Well, I certainly did," replied the Inspector,

who felt unconsciously impelled to an admission of the circumscribed views with which he had all along regarded the case, "but I have had doubts about that Jimmy for some time, still they did not make me think the other boy was innocent; the fact is, I thought I had a first-rate case, and because things seemed to fit, I was satisfied, and so didn't go as deep as I ought below the surface."

"Well, it strikes me," said Giles in return, drawing up the reins, and settling himself ready to start, "that this 'ere trial ought to be a lesson to all of us, high and low; we didn't ought to be so ready to judge one another, we ought to look deep, as you say, and then we shouldn't come to such awk'ard *conclus'ons*; so, good-night to ye, Master Mills, and I wish all your prisoners was like to come off as clear as Phil Hartley."

The old man whistled to his horse as he made an end of speaking, and started off at a gentle trot, the Inspector remaining behind to conclude the business he had in the town.

CHAPTER XV.

"SHOWERS OF BLESSING."

And how had the poor, widowed mother of the falsely-accused boy lived through the dread suspense of that long March day? She had risen early, and tidied her little home, as though in expectation of a guest, nay, she even went so far as to make up Phil's bed, for, who could tell but that he who had gone forth weeping, should not come again with joy?

However, as the day advanced, and, standing in

her doorway, she saw, first, Farmer Wilson drive through the gate, and then the carriage from Oakleigh Hall, out of which Emily's tear-filled eyes met her's with a sadness her poor heart reflected, and no encouragement to hope was held out to her by the Squire, or even Mr. Lyle, the little ray she had admitted for the last week, fled suddenly away, and was altogether lost in the gloomy shadows which surrounded the Assize-Court.

Rough, but kindly expressed sympathy was offered her by those of her own class who now and again passed through the gate; but this was not news, and Jane hungered and thirsted for news, so much so, that when strangers drove or rode through to Oakleigh, she would venture to ask them if they had come from or by Kingston, and if they could tell her how the trial which had commenced that day was likely to end. To all these inquiries she received a negative reply, and her heart sank very low.

It was just about noon, and Jane had barely sat down to her frugal dinner, when the latch of the door was gently lifted, and Fanny Lawson came into the room.

"I've come to bide a while with you, Jane," said the girl, untying her bonnet, and taking off her shawl, "I thought you'd be lonesome to-day, so I hurried over the work at home and come to see if I can't cheer you up a bit."

"You're very kind, Fanny, for I was feeling just then as if I should go wild, sitting here with no one to speak my thoughts to; oh, Fanny, what shall I do if Phil gets seven years;" and Jane leant her elbows on the table, and hid her face in her hands.

"You must just wait patient the Lord's time," replied Fanny, "none of us know how near it is, perhaps; I believe we miss many a blessing through being so impatient; but, Jane, I know your trouble's very great, so you must take all I say kindly, I don't mean to take you to task, you know."

"Oh, yes, I know," replied Jane, "but you're quite right, I'm a deal too impatient."

With Fanny's company the afternoon did not seem so intolerable to the poor, anxious mother, as the morning had been.

"Just listen, Jane," said the girl presently, as she stood in the bright sunlight by the open door, with her stitching in her hand, "just listen to that bird on the great walnut-tree down in the hollow; it's a thrush, isn't it? It's been singing ever since I've been here, and I believe it means good news; poor mother used to say it did; she came from a part of the country, you know, where folks believe those sort of things, and she always said when a thrush, or any singing bird comes nigh one's home, and sings so constant, it's *sure* to mean good news."

"Oh, Fanny," said Jane, coming to the door, and listening with evident pleasure to the sweet, little songster, "what an odd thing for you to say; but it doesn't seem right to believe those sort of things, does it?"

"Well, I don't know," said Fanny. "God sends the birds and everything else for our pleasure, and good; He can make a thrush His messenger if He likes, I suppose; at any rate, it's more cheering to think so, than to be always greeting over trouble and such."

"Well," said Jane, trying to be cheerful, "I'll try and think it's good news."

Thus the bright afternoon wore slowly away, but no news came, and the bird sang on.

"I can't help thinking the folks are very late back from Kingston," remarked Fanny, after the two women had had their tea, and the room was once more set in order; "I remember last Lent when old Jacob Hawkins was tried for sheep-stealing, everybody came back much sooner than this."

The sun had long since set, and the dark night-

shadows had fallen over down and common; Fanny, who had once more retreated to the doorway, could see nothing distinctly in the outer world but the bright, evening star stealing slowly up the sky. She strained her ears to listen for roll of wheels or foot-fall of horse, but not a sound disturbed the stillness of the cold, night air, and the thrush had long since ceased its song. What weary minutes they seemed, Fanny thought, but if weary to her, what must they be to Jane with her mother's heart and strong affection! The girl looked round at her, she was sitting in her chair near the fire, and her face looked very pale in the bright glow, her eyes were closed and her lips seemed moving. "She's praying," thought Fanny; "oh, poor, poor soul."

And now there came a sound along the road of a heavy but rapidly approaching footstep.

"There's news," said the girl to herself, "maybe it's bad; no, it *must* be good."

She darted one more look towards the desolate woman sitting by the hearth, who evidently had not heard the footstep, then she sprang out into the road, and ran a few yards, only just in time to seize Ned Sawyer's arm, and prevent his going any further.

"Ned, you silly fellow," she almost cried, "where *are* you running to so wild?"

Ned fell back against the hedge, and gasped for breath.

"Are you going to speak?" asked Fanny, almost shaking him.

Ned made a weak attempt at utterance, but the words were unintelligible. The girl's impatience increased.

"Farm'r—Wil—son—Phil" gasped the exhausted lad, but Fanny's quick ear had caught the sound of approaching horse and chaise; that surely was the unmistakeable foot-fall of the farmer's fast-trotting horse! she had heard it too often not to recognise it

now; with the keen instinct of a woman she divined the truth at once.

"He's safe—he's free—isn't he?" she appealed to Ned, this time patting him on the shoulder (though very energetically) instead of shaking him.

But the lad had no time to reply, the horse and chaise had neared the toll-gate, and was slackening pace, one minute more, and Phil had sprung to the ground, and his arms were round his mother's neck.

"There now—didn't I tell yer?" said Ned, who was gradually recovering his breath.

"No, you didn't," replied Fanny, crying for joy, and wondering all the time why she did so.

"Well, now, Fanny, look how I've been runnin' all the way from Ryelands; young master, he got home early; he says he left the 'Sizes just as Farmer Wilson went after his gig to bring Phil home, and he rode fast all the way, and never stopped once, and can't he ride too, young master; but when I heerd him tellin' the news, I couldn't stop for nothin', I just run off without askin' leave; and now everythin's right again, aint it? oh, — " here a sob prevented the lad from proceeding with his speech.

"You silly boy, Ned," cried Fanny, "what are you crying for?"

"Why, everybody's cryin'," replied Ned, "how can I help it? you're cryin', Fanny."

"Hi—you, Ned; isn't that you?" called the farmer from his gig, "just come and hold the horse a minute or two, my lad."

Ned willingly obeyed, and the farmer then alighted and went into the toll-house. Phil and his mother were standing on the matting in front of the fireplace, feeling, more than expressing, their happiness.

"Well, Mrs. Hartley," began the farmer, "your boy there has forgiven me, but I shan't feel satisfied till you've done so too."

"Oh, Sir," replied Jane, "don't say anything

about that; you thought you was doing right all along, I'm sure, or else you wouldn't have done it."

"No, that I shouldn't," returned the farmer; "but still I can't help thinking I've been wrong somewhere; a little too hard, eh? because the boy was full of mischief; well, well, it's been a sad mistake, I'm uncommonly sorry for it all, but what we've got to look at now is, making up for it in some sort of way, eh? we must try, at all events, but now good night to you both, I shall see you again soon."

"Good night, Sir, and thank you," said Jane, coming to the door as Mr. Wilson went out to his gig.

"I suppose you feel happy too," remarked the farmer to Ned, whose face was radiant with smiles as he stood at the horse's head.

"Yes," grinned Ned, "I should think everybody's happy to-night; I believes the very horse is."

"Go along, you simpleton," said the farmer laughing as he got into his gig, and drove on, and then Ned walked into the toll-house, and contemplated Phil with much satisfaction.

"Don't it look nice, Phil—the old place, I mean," he remarked, taking a general survey of the room.

Phil agreed heartily that it did; he had been feasting his eyes on every article the room contained, and the old screeching, gurgling clock up in the corner sounded in his ear like wonderful music.

"Won't it be nice to wake to-morrer morning, resumed Ned, who was evidently in a contemplative vein, "and find everythin' just like it was afore you went away, as if you'd never been gone at all, you know."

"Ah, but everything isn't quite the same," answered Phil, "I miss poor Granny, don't you, mother?"

Jane shook her head sadly; "It's been a sad winter, Phil," she said, "without her and you; I shall never forget it; these sort of troubles always leave their mark."

Philip was silent, innocent as he was of the great cause of the sorrow which had been endured, he did not feel himself entirely free from blame about poor Granny. "She'd have fretted and died just the same," he thought, "if I'd run away to sea as I first meant, and I *should* have run away if that tramp hadn't told me of the burning of those wheat-stacks; so her dying would have been my fault after all."

"Hark!" cried Fanny, "there's a carriage stopped; I'll go, Jane." She ran out of the door, as she spoke, and down to the gate. The Rector was alighting from the Squire's carriage as she did so.

"Ah, Fanny," said Mr. Lyle in his mild way, "you here? that is very good of you, child; I thought you would manage to come somehow; you have all been in my mind many times to-day."

The Rector only just looked in at the door, as the carriage was waiting for him, but he comprehended in one loving glance the little group by the fire.

"Poor Jane," he said softly, "the brightness has come back to your life now, the 'winter is past, and the rain is over and gone;' ah, well, Our Father in Heaven knows what is best for us. God bless you, my children—God bless you all," and the Rector turned as he spoke and re-entered the carriage, which then drove on.

"I say," said Ned, "we'd best make off, Fanny; there's a sight of folk to be told the good news to-night; there's poor, old, blind Kathy, and them at the Water-Mill; I aint goin' to leave anybody out, I can tell ye; there's no Mast' Giles to stop me now."

"Well, I'm ready," replied the girl, tying on her bonnet, and wrapping her shawl round her; "if you're in such a hurry, Ned, you'd best go on alone."

"Oh, no," said Ned, "I want to talk."

"Well, good night, Fanny," said Jane, kissing her young friend warmly, "and thank you for cheering me up all this long day; your bird *was* good

news, Fanny; I shall listen for it again when I'm in trouble."

"Good night, Jane; good night, Phil," said the kindly girl, "you'll find a deal to talk about, I daresay."

"Good night," shouted Ned, who, in his impatience to disseminate the good news, was already some yards up the road; and then Jane closed the door, and set about preparing Philip's evening meal.

"Fancy little Ben," said Ned to Fanny, as they walked quickly down to the village; "if he aint been puttin' of his picters and playthins all to rights the whole of this blessed week, because, he said, he know'd as Phil was comin' home; mother's been a'most scared to hear him speak so certain; Ben do say queer things too, Fanny, I can tell ye; we thinks he dreams 'em when he goes to sleep."

"Ah, but he don't," replied the girl, "you see it's just this, Ned; poor little Ben can't walk about, and go anywhere like we can, he's obliged to lay and think all day, and so God sends him beautiful thoughts to make up for his crippled body; I often think Ben's living very near to Heaven, and someday we shall find him gone there when we least expect it."

"Lor, Fanny, do you really think so?" said Ned, looking quite sad, and his spirits very much sobered.

"Don't be unhappy about it," resumed the girl, "Ben wouldn't be, I'm sure, and you've no call to greet over it to-night, at all events; but here we are at the turning; now you're going home, and to the Water-Mill, I suppose; well, good night, Ned, I must be quick home, and tell my folks the good news."

So saying, Fanny ran off, and Ned, calling after her "good night," pursued his way alone, wondering much, as he went along, about the Heaven Fanny said his little brother was so near, and remembering how once when Mr. Lyle had been to see the sick

boy, he had said there would come a day when little Ben would walk about in fairer fields than these among the Surrey Downs; so Ned was sure those fields must be in Heaven, for Ben would never, never walk whilst he lived on earth. However, there was joyful news to take to him to-night, so dismissing from his mind all serious thoughts for the present, he ran lightly on to his home.

CHAPTER XVI.

REST FOR THE WEARY.

THE cold March winds had given place to genial April showers, and Easter had turned. The penitent Jimmy, who had undergone his examination before the Kingston magistrates, and had been by them committed to take his trial at the summer Assizes, was now located within the walls of the same jail from which Philip Hartley had been so happily delivered. He was sick, and prostrate in body and soul, and for many weeks it was doubtful whether he would sufficiently recover to be able to take his trial. His mother had been accounted clear of all participation in the crime, and was therefore, after a short detention, set at liberty, to wander—whither?

But the poor soul was satisfied that the course she had pursued had been a just one; hunger and thirst, and no home in which she could claim a shelter were a species of suffering with which she was so well acquainted that it came to her as an inexorable condition of her existence; even to sin and wickedness she had been so long accustomed to yield a passive

assent, that it was greatly to be wondered why, in the present instance, she should have displayed such determined hostility towards them. But it must be remembered that the evil to which she had offered no opposition was that which only affected herself, her immediate belongings, and miserable associates; only when its destroying bitterness trailed, like the Serpent of old, to the hearth of the innocent, did the pulse of good, so long hidden in her fallen nature, quicken and stir within her.

And she had found an ally in Jimmy which she did not expect. She was quick to perceive in the first stages of his illness that a change of some sort was working within him, but the wanderings of delirium conveyed but a vague impression to her of what that change might be. Even now she only partly understood the motives which prompted him to a confession of his guilt, but that fear was the strongest incentive, she had no doubt.

And now that the innocent was justified, and the two perpetrators of the crime were, the one, passed beyond human jurisdiction, the other, lying in the common jail awaiting the sentence of his Judge, whither should she turn her weary steps until kindly Death should lay his hand upon her heart, and call her "Friend." Whither, ah, whither! For, alas, the wretched poor, the poor of this sad creature's class, groping through the evil and the want of what to them is bare existence, have no consoler at its drear end but the sad Angel with the drooping wings, and sharp sickle, the Angel who, as he unlocks the gate of Eternity, veils his eyes, that he may not see which way the spirits turn, as they pass through to Endless Joy, or Endless Woe!

It was bright early morning when Jimmy's mother, about an hour after her liberation, stood irresolute for a few minutes in the main street of the old town of Kingston. Her face was turned country-wards;

behind her lay, what was to her, the drear city—the great, over-grown London; she cast a furtive glance in its direction once or twice, and shuddered; then the wistful expression of her face deepened to a strong yearning as the distant country opened before her in its sweet beauty; she walked down the street slowly and hesitatingly, then stopped, again irresolute; a policeman was observing her movements, and as she suddenly became aware of his proximity, she attempted to call up a look of decision into her face, and again walked on, gradually hastening her steps, and never turning once to the right or left, till the houses became few and far between, and the wild, heathy commons opened all around. Then she took a long breath, and a sense of true emancipation stole over her. The singing birds up in the bursting trees told of freedom; the wanton profusion of the early spring flowers, born to live and die in their spotless purity, told the same tale; the very air seemed laden with the essence of it; and Nature looked kind, and gentle, and sympathetic in its revivified youth, so much kinder than the stern, human faces she had left behind; and Nature might be kinder still, she had gently running streams, and deep, peaceful pools wherein Life's burden could be laid softly down amid the singing of the birds, and the blooming of the flowers; and thus with the Tempter hovering in her wake, the woman wandered on through the pleasant Surrey land.

And Jimmy, after a few days, was removed to the County Jail, where the fever, which had wasted him so long, still refused to abandon its prey.

In the vague recollections of the Missioner which ever and again flitted like rays of light through the broken aisles of the wretched boy's memory, the Great White Throne, the Day of Judgment, and the Awful Books held the most prominent position; all else seemed partially, if not totally forgotten. This

was observed by the chaplain of the jail with much concern, but it was some weeks before the state of Jimmy's health would permit him to hold a conversation of any length with the poor boy.

However, one afternoon, on entering his cell he found him apparently so much better than usual that he thought he might venture on a few remarks he had long been desirous of making. Taking a chair, and placing it near the bed on which Jimmy was lying, he sat down, and after a few kind, and general observations, asked him if he would like to hear anything of the Missioner who, by God's mercy, had brought him to a sense of his awful sin, in Aldgate Church.

"Oh, yes," cried Jimmy, partly raising himself on his elbow, and his sunken eyes shining like distant lamps; "oh, yes."

"You will remember," resumed the chaplain, "that when you made your confession to the Lord Chief Baron in the Assize-Court at Kingston, his lordship asked you if you could tell him the name of the Missioner, but you were unable to do so; since then, however, the Judge has received a letter from him, which letter he has kindly forwarded to me. It clearly proves that you kept back no part of the painful story you had to tell. This true friend of yours—for indeed, my poor boy, this gentleman who is only known to you as 'the Missioner,' was your true friend—in reading the assize intelligence in one of the daily papers was so convinced that the lad who had made so astounding a confession, was the same whom he had earnestly exhorted in Aldgate Church, that he at once wrote to the Judge, and gave him a full account of the conversations he had had with you on two occasions. He was especially interested in you, he writes, and always remembered you in his prayers to the great and good God. He also adds that he was so anxious to impress upon

you the hateful wickedness of your deliberate Lie, and the sad effects it had had on an innocent fellow-creature, and the awful doom you were calling down on yourself by not repenting of your sin, that he is afraid he only taught you the fear, and not the love of God."

The clergyman paused; Jimmy looked deeply interested, but did not speak at once; at last he said, in the tone of one who has been carefully considering the subject of his remarks:

"What's that—the love of God?"

"Is it possible, my poor boy," inquired the clergyman, "that you have never heard of it? but you surely know what is meant by love?"

Jimmy shook his head vaguely; he knew nothing of it whatever, either theoretically or practically, even the word itself, regarded simply as a word, had a foreign sound to ears accustomed only to language expressive of the lowest and basest passions.

The clergyman was for some little time silent. It had been written, he reflected, by a great, living father of the Church,* that in countries far remote from civilization, races of men were known to exist in whose meagre language words expressive of love or gratitude had no place, for the simple but terrible reason that feelings to correspond with such words formed no part of their spiritual organisation; to such a depth of depravity is it possible for human nature to have sunk; but to find so striking an evidence of similar degradation in the most enlightened city in the world, amongst the people of a land whereon the choicest gifts of Heaven have been poured, gave serious cause, in the opinion of this earnest servant of the Lord, for the deepest humiliation and sorrow.

"My poor lad," he said kindly, "you surely must have had some affection, some love for your father

* Trench: On the Study of Words.

and mother, and the little brothers and sisters you told me the other day all died in one short week; you must have had some kindly feeling for those belonging to you; think for a moment,—would you not like to be with them once more, and hear their voices —"

"No," interrupted Jimmy decidedly, but not rudely, "I shouldn't; father, he only cursed and swore, and beat me and mother and the little ones; and mother, she was always sulky, and the others cryin' for food; oh, no, I'm glad I'm out of that."

"Can you not tell me of *anyone*," asked the clergyman gently, "who once has spoken kindly to you, has helped you out of any trouble, or perhaps has given you food when you were hungry?"

Jimmy looked intelligent. "The gentleman at Aldgate Church," he said quickly, "he give me a shillin', and he spoke soft; 'you look hungry,' he says, 'take this and get some food.' I often think of what he said, because nobody spoke such words to me before."

"And how do you feel about this gentleman?" inquired the chaplain, "do you feel as if you hated him, and would like to harm him in any way?"

Jimmy raised himself in his bed, and regarded his interlocutor earnestly before he spoke.

"I'd do anythink in the world for him," he said at last; "I'd bear beatin's, and cursin's, and all that sort, just to hear him speak soft agin; I don't want no more shillin's, you know; it aint for that I says it; but I'd like that night to come back as he walked up Whitechapel along of me, speakin' so soft; oh, yes, I'd do anythink for *him*.

"Then you love him," cried the clergyman triumphantly; "that is love, my poor boy, when you desire to do good to your fellow-creatures, and not evil; when you are willing, for their sakes, to endure suffering, and are ready to devote your whole life to

their service—I have struck on the good soil at last; now you have learned to love the brother whom you *have* seen, I can pray with a sure and joyful hope that you will come to love the God whom you have *not* seen; for, oh, my poor boy, when your heart is filled to overflowing with love for Our Father in Heaven, you will be richer than all the kings of the earth; you will be the owner of a treasure which no man can take from you; you will have passed from Death to Life; and the fear of the Judgment, and the Great White Throne which now makes your poor heart sink with terror, will all be lost in your perfect love of a perfect God."

Jimmy was lying down in his bed again, looking very much exhausted, but he listened intently to the chaplain.

"Will God love me?" he asked solemnly.

"Oh, yes," replied the clergyman gladly; "He loves you now; He has loved you all through your dark, sinful life, or He would not have sent His servant, the Missioner, to you, to tell you of your sin. Happy for you, my poor boy, that you obeyed the Message of Almighty God at once, that you went swiftly to confess your guilt, and own your bitter sorrow. It was fear which led you, and not love, I know; but God can choose what instrument He pleases, and the beginning of your salvation He has worked by fear—let us not spoil the good work by leaving out love. You are looking very tired now, my poor boy, so I will talk to you no more at present, but think over what I have been saying, and when I come again I will teach you how to pray."

The chaplain rose as he spoke, and smiling kindly at the suffering boy, left the cell.

And thus the work begun by the Missioner on the night of the cold, January thaw, was to be continued by this other labourer in the Lord's Vineyard during the long days of the golden summer, and though, as

might be expected, the progress towards complete eradication of the evil influences which had so long surrounded Jimmy, was very slow, yet it was sure, and from the good seed sown, buds of promise were already making their appearance, from which the clergyman could judge that, if the boy's life were spared, a faithful soldier might be enrolled under the Banner of the Cross. But, it often occurred to him, when he beheld the fever-wasted form of the poor lad, that Jimmy might someday leave the prison much as S. Peter did, only, the angel who should lead him forth, would not leave him in the street of a city of this sad world, but in the Golden Street of the City of God, where, with all the lost sheep which with great rejoicings have been brought Home from the Wilderness of Sin, he should read his name as a child of the Blessed One, written by God's Own Hand, in the Lamb's Book of Life.

* * * * *

It was the evening of the day on which Jimmy's mother, after her liberation, had turned her back on London and Kingston, and, with one fearful thought gradually shaping itself into as fearful an intention, had wandered out into the open country. The day had been alternately fine and showery, but now, as the sun was setting, not a rain-cloud was to be seen, and the fair land, and the fairer sky looked calm and peaceful in the fading light.

Master Giles, as he plodded along the high road between Hillington and Oakleigh, was not at all insensible to the beauty of the scene before him, though the importance of the scheme which had been agitating his rather solid understanding for the last week or more, might have sufficiently excused his being so. On the contrary, however, it occurred to him on this peaceful April evening, that never before had Spring appeared so lovely, never before could the woods

have looked so green, the streams so full and limpid, the sky so high and blue; aye, truly, never before, for Master Giles, in those other Springs that were gone, had not seen in the Mirror of Nature, as he did now, the reflection perfect and glorious, of the Great Maker of the Universe. But now, as his eye fell on the swelling downs, the wooded heights, the pleasant farm lands stretching away all over the valley, the happy homesteads, and the well-fed flocks, his heart was filled with a great thankfulness, though his lips were dumb.

On arriving at the toll-house, to which he was bound, he found Jane sitting in the doorway at her usual evening employment, sewing, while Phil was busy working in the little flower garden.

"Good evenin', Mis' Hartley," said the old man, taking the seat Jane offered him, "I've walked out to-night on purpose to see you about a little business."

"I hope it isn't anything serious," remarked Jane, who fancied her old friend looked singularly solemn.

"Well, it *is* rayther ser'ous," replied Giles reflectively, slowly nodding his head; "when a man gets to my time of life, Mis' Hartley, I think he ought to begin to make up his books; come to a reckonin' of some sort, you know; well, that's what I've been after since last Friday was a week, and I find I've got a tidy bit of money saved. Now, it strikes me, there didn't ought to have been so much. Where's the widows and orphans? I says to myself, when I looks at them books. They've had nowt out of me, *I* know. I've been a close-fisted one, I have, I can tell ye. And it warn't only the widows and orphans nayther, that made me feel queer. I take hold of the Bible, and I places that 'ere Book by the side of *my* books, and I read in *Saint* Matthew about the Lord Who's to come in His Glory, and divide His people as a shepherd divides his sheep from the

goats; and, Mis' Hartley—I say this most solemn—when I'd done readin', I shut up *my* books, and pushes 'em away, and there warn't no doubt in my mind as to where *I* desarved to be in the Last Day; that tidy bit of money would keep me on the left hand, if nothin' else did. So then, I've thought and thought a goodish bit what I'd best do with some of that 'ere money, and I've had another look at them 'ere books of mine, and I found there was a little sum as I could put away for that young girl down here, Fanny Lawson. She's a good girl that, Mis' Hartley, and can't earn for herself, seein' she does for her father and the little ones since her mother's dead; and, she was uncommon kind about wishin' me to come to this 'ere church of yours.

Master Giles paused a minute or two, apparently lost in thought, and Jane, who had been listening to him with great delight, did not interrupt him. At last the old man went on:

"And now, Mis' Hartley, I'm comin' to the little bit of business I've got with you;" he said; "it's often struck me if your Phil had had summut to do before this, as he'd never have got into the scrapes he did, and then that other trouble mightn't have come upon him. Now what d'ye think of him comin' to work along of me? A miller's is a good trade, Mis' Hartley, and there's a tidy bit of money to set him up for himself when he gets to be a man, or most like he'd be able to take my place—now, just give me your thoughts on this 'ere question, Mis' Hartley."

Jane could not speak at once for gratitude. "Oh, Master Giles," she said at last, "I never heard of anything so kind; you're thinking of the widows and orphans now, that's sure, if you never did before. I couldn't wish anything better for my Phil, Master Giles, and it's what he's always wished himself, but I knew I couldn't afford it; oh, you are a

good, kind friend to me, and I hope God will bless you for it."

"There aint no doubt about that," returned Giles, "still I don't want to go about this 'ere business expectin' rewards. I want to do my duty by your Phil, because he's an orphan. You see, Mis' Hartley, duty's the way as I want to look at it, and folks didn't ought to be thanked for doin' of their duty. But there now, just see here—there's your Rector comin', along of Farmer Wilson. I can pretty well guess *your* business here, Master," continued the old man in an undertone, and evidently in fancy addressing himself to the farmer, "you're comin' to propose summut for Phil, I daresay; but I've been beforehand with ye;" and Giles leant back in his chair, and stroked his chin, whilst he contemplated the approaching farmer with much satisfaction.

"Well, Jane, and how are you?" asked Mr. Lyle as he came up to the door, and Jane and her visitor rose to make way for him and Farmer Wilson to pass into the room; "Ah, Giles, you here? I hope I see you well?"

"Thank ye, Master, I'm pretty comfortable; I wish you was feelin' and lookin' the same."

"Ah, Giles, one doesn't get younger," said the Rector smiling; "but there, there, we haven't come to talk of aches and pains, but something very pleasant—our good friend here, Jane," (and Mr. Lyle inclined his head towards the farmer as he spoke,) "has come to propose that Philip should be apprenticed to some business, and he wishes to be at the expense."

"Yes," put in the farmer rather nervously, who now that the ice was broken, felt he could go on, "certainly—certainly—all the expense; well—what d'ye think of a grocer—eh? or a draper—eh? or a—a—a—" here Farmer Wilson's brain was so beseiged by the variety of trades which occurred to

him all at once, that he came to a sudden standstill, whilst Master Giles quietly suggested "a miller."

"Very good, Giles—very good indeed," remarked the Rector mildly, "a miller's is a good trade, and would keep the lad in the country; a capital thought, Giles—very good indeed."

Giles took a long breath of satisfaction, but kept his eye on the farmer.

"What do you think Philip would choose for himself, Mrs. Hartley," inquired that perplexed individual, "I'm willing he should be just what he likes best. I think it would be as well, you know, for some one to have a tight hand over him, that is, if he's anything like he used to be—eh? don't mean it unkind, you know, eh? but easy masters don't make boys good workmen; you know that, Giles, don't you—eh? just let me have your opinion now?"

"Well, Master Wilson," returned Giles, settling his hands in his pockets, and evidently concentrating his mind on the subject upon which he was going to remark, "you ask me for my opinion, and I'm willin' to give it you free, and gratis—now, here it is: masters can be too easy with boys—and—masters can be too hard--I don't hold with one nor t'other—but that's naything here nor there; Mis' Hartley would like Phil to be a miller—Phil himself chooses to be a miller—this here good Rector of yours thinks a miller's is a good trade—and I've made up my mind for that 'ere boy to come and work along of me—and I don't want no money paid, because I've got a tidy bit of my own; so it's a miller as Phil's to be, Master Wilson, and that was all settled before you come—only just, though, mind ye; I'd just got my words out, when I see you comin' along; now—don't go and take it unkind—you've got a good many of your own to look after, and I've got none, so you won't go grudgin' me in the end, I know."

"Oh, no; oh, dear no," said the Rector, who was

much pleased with Giles' proposal, "I don't think any occupation could have been suggested more suitable for Philip; let us have the lad in, and talk to him; we shall then hear what he thinks of it all."

Jane went to the door, and looked right and left for Phil, but as he was not to be seen, she walked out into the road and turned her glance towards Hillington; then she suddenly hastened back into the room, her face very pale.

"There is something the matter up the road," she cried, "the Squire's carriage has stopped, and there's some folks standing, and kneeling down, under the old elm tree by the pool."

As Jane ceased speaking, the Rector hurriedly seized his hat, and followed by the farmer and Master Giles, hastened to discover what had occurred. Half-way up the road they met Emily hurrying to the toll-house.

"What is it, my child; no accident, I hope?" asked the Rector anxiously.

"No, not to us," replied the little girl; "but oh, Mr. Lyle, there is such a poor woman lying under the elm tree just as if she were dead, and I am going to see if Mrs. Hartley can give her anything to revive her."

"Here—where's that Phil?" said the farmer; "oh, up there; he shall run to the farm, and get some brandy," and Mr. Wilson hurried towards the group by the pool, to send the lad on his errand.

When he reached the spot near which the Squire's carriage was standing, he found Miss Hazelwood kneeling on the turf, endeavouring to restore to life a poor, inanimate creature whom the farmer at once recognized.

"Why it's that hopping-woman," he exclaimed, "you remember her, Phil, don't you—eh? Jimmy's mother, you know—eh?"

"Yes," said Phil, "I knew her directly; she's

dying for want of food, Miss Hazelwood says—mother must have her home, and give her some."

"What! have her home, after the trouble all her lot brought on you—eh?" then the farmer seemed suddenly to reflect; "well, but you're right though—eh? poor thing, she looks very bad;—now, Phil, you boy, you're a good boy too, you are, eh? just run up to the farm and tell them to send me a little brandy at once—that's right, my lad, go quick," for Phil, not waiting to be told a second time, was already running as fast as he could in the direction of the Deepdale farm.

Meanwhile Mr. Lyle, accompanied by Master Giles, had now arrived, followed by Jane, who at once insisted that the poor woman should be taken to the toll-house.

"Never mind who, or what she is," said Jane warmly, "she must come till something can be done for her; why—her dress is wet and muddy—has she been in the pool?"

But no one could say, and as Philip had now returned from the farmhouse, which was no great distance down the road, his mother and Miss Hazelwood at once proceeded to pour a small quantity of brandy into the poor creature's mouth. Slowly, very slowly, consciousness returned, and the dim eyes which had seemingly closed for ever, now opened to behold kind and eager faces looking anxiously into them.

"Speak to her, mother," said Phil, "tell her we don't mean to be unkind."

"Poor thing," murmured Jane softly, touching the woman's hand, "I am very sorry for you; you look so bad."

"Help me to raise her up, Jane," said Miss Hazelwood, "and then she can rest against the tree; my poor soul, you feel a little better now, do you not?"

The blank misery in the woman's face seemed slowly to fade before the sweet tones of the lady's

voice. "Speak to me again," she whispered, fixing her dim eyes on the gentle countenance above her.

"You must not be frightened," said Miss Hazelwood, "because we know who you are; we are all friends, and will do our best for you; you must not think of anything until you feel quite strong."

Tears gradually stole into the faded eyes, and rolled slowly down the sunken cheeks.

"It will do you good to cry a little," said the lady softly.

Farmer Wilson and Master Giles had withdrawn a little from the scene, and were engaged seemingly in a most animated conversation, but Mr. Lyle stood by the side of Jimmy's mother, who was making another attempt to speak.

"All day long I've been walkin'," she said; "I left Kingston early this mornin'; I don't know what made me turn this way; I couldn't help it; I seemed led."

"God has led you to us," observed Miss Hazelwood softly, "He knew what was best for you."

"I've been thinkin' all day I should like to die," resumed the woman; "I've been lookin' in all the streams and pools as I come along, and when I see this, I thought I'd best lay myself down in it, and never wake again; but I got frightened when I was in the water, and I struggled out, and fell down here."

"Poor, poor soul," cried Jane with ready sympathy, "you must have felt despairing; I know so well how you must have felt."

The woman looked at her curiously.

"Don't you hate me?" she asked, with something like fear in her voice.

"Oh, no," replied Jane, "why should I?"

"Because we was all so wicked," said the unhappy creature; "oh, I've seen your white face, and black gown ever since last hoppin' time."

"But my face isn't white now," cried Jane cheerfully, "so you mustn't think of that any more; just let me help you to get up, and come to my house, and then you shall rest, and have some food, and when you're stronger you shall talk."

Assisted by Master Giles, whose conversation with the farmer had come to a conclusion, Jane helped the poor creature to rise to her feet, and then they all slowly turned their steps towards the toll-house.

"I see God's Hand in this," observed Mr. Lyle to Miss Hazelwood, as they walked down the road, "we must get this poor soul strong, and then find employment down here for her, amongst us. I was much pleased with the sense of right and wrong she displayed in the Assize-Court at Kingston. I am sure our charity will not be undeservedly bestowed in this instance."

"I am so glad you think so," returned the lady, "for she seems in sore need of human sympathy and help. It appears very shocking to me that persons of her class are so much left to themselves in the poor districts of London, and other large places of commerce. It is not sufficient that a Mission should now and then be sent amongst them; nor can we reasonably expect that clergymen can make much way, if the material wants of the poor are so much neglected; they must be humanized before they can understand even the first principles of Christianity."

"I quite agree with you," rejoined the Rector, "the only way to make any lasting impression on these abject poor is to appeal to their better nature through the senses. Tell man or woman of this class to pray for their daily bread, and it shall surely be given them, they will not believe you; but give them some bread, and then tell them God has sent it, and will send more, and far higher and more precious gifts if they will but learn to ask in faith, and

the probability is that some, at least, will believe to their soul's salvation; but here we are at the toll-gate—now, Jane, what do you propose doing with that poor wanderer?"

Jane had settled her in poor old Granny's great arm-chair by the fire, and was now returned to the door to say good night to her friends.

"Oh, Sir, I shall keep her here for a day or two at least, and then perhaps, you'll be able to tell me what I ought to do."

"Just so, Jane," returned the Rector, "very good; I will talk over my plans with Miss Hazelwood, and let you know. God's Blessing on you, Jane, and your boy too; I suppose it is all settled about his going to Giles?"

"Oh, yes, Sir—and I am so glad, and thankful—Mr. Wilson's been so good too; he says as he can't do anything for Phil, he shall have to look after this poor woman, he supposes; so I think, Sir, we shall all manage together."

"That is well, Jane; all working together here—the rich with the poor—the unlearned and simple with the clever and great—all reaping the same glorious reward hereafter in the Harvest above. This is as it should be. Truly our lines have fallen in pleasant places. God bless you once more, Jane. God bless you all." And the Rector, after a little further conversation with the ladies, who had by this time re-entered the carriage, turned away from the toll-house, and walked down the road with the farmer, discussing the events of the evening.

* * * * *

And so it came to pass as time went on, that Jimmy's mother, when her strength had been restored by good food, and Christian care, found employment on the pleasant farm-lands surrounding Oakleigh; and not only were her bodily necessities

thus supplied, but, subjected to humanizing influences, the latent good in her nature gradually struggled forth, and raised, as it were, a golden vail between the drear desert of her past existence, and the peaceful, contented life she now led. So thus we leave her, still walking truly in the Valley of the Shadow, but with the Golden Track before her which leads far beyond and above that Valley, and is only lost in the Glory which for ever shines upon the Everlasting Hills.

And poor, fever-wasted, sin-sick Jimmy, lying on his prison bed, from which, alas, he was to rise no more, nor ever to stand before an earthly Judge! Yet why need we say, alas! Is there no joy in watching the crimson stains of sin fade slowly, perhaps, but surely, until the soul of our erring brother is washed whiter than the whitest snow? Is there no joy in hearing the chains, in which the Evil One has bound him, fall link by link away, until the only cords which bind his purified spirit are those golden weavings of a Merciful Love that will never loose their hold? Is there not rather cause for the greatest rejoicing in the most certain hope, that this poor, outcast boy, repentant, and so forgiven, will stand perfect and sinless, arrayed in the Righteousness of Christ, before the Lord Almighty Judge in the Day of the Great Assize?

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